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THE DECIAN PERSECUTION

P R E F A C E.

THE chief sources of information with regard to the Decian persecution are the Epistles and Treatises of Cyprian, and the letters of Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, preserved by Eusebius in the sixth and seventh books of his History. Besides these we have the highly coloured narrative—probably derived from oral tradition—of Gregory of Nyssa, and the very untrustworthy ‘Acta Martyrum,’ from which, with the exception of the ‘Acta Pionii,’ we gain but little in tracing the history of the persecution. Thus it will be seen that our information is of the most fragmentary nature, and for two reasons in particular we are unable to gain a clear view of the course of affairs: first, that in no case do different authorities narrate

the execution of the edict in the same province ; and second, that the tone of the proceedings in each case varied with the personality of the governor of the province. We are therefore unable to introduce with any certainty features observable in one province to supply the defects in our knowledge of another, and thus to set before our eyes a course of procedure followed uniformly in every part.

For this reason I have, after the necessary introductory chapters (i.-v.), traced the history of the persecution in the West, in so far as the works of Cyprian and the 'Acta Martyrum' permit. The important questions connected with the restitution of the *lapsi* occupy chapter viii., while Egypt and the East, for which our information is drawn from Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and the various Acts of Martyrs, are dealt with in chapter ix.

A study of the persecution would be incomplete without a short account of the Church's position under Gallus, whose antichristian policy—less aggressive, for cogent reasons, than that of Decius—failed no less miserably than that of

his predecessor. The term “Decian persecution” I have interpreted in its strictest sense, following Cardinal Baronius, whose note—called forth by the inaccuracies of the ‘Acta Martyrum,’ where the whole period 249-260 is sometimes called the Decian persecution—I have summarised and quoted in the essay.

I have endeavoured to form independent conclusions from the evidence at my disposal; but I remain deeply indebted to the work of M. Aubé, ‘L’Église et l’État dans la Seconde Moitié du Troisième Siècle’; the article entitled “Christenverfolgung,” in F. X. Kraus’s ‘Real-Encyclopädie,’ by Dr F. Görres; and also Schiller’s ‘Geschichte der römische Kaiserzeit.’ I have acknowledged in footnotes my obligation to these and other authors whenever I have consciously reproduced their work.

It may be well to say that the essay in its first form was complete before the appearance of Archbishop Benson’s great study of the life and times of Cyprian, which, however, I have frequently consulted and quoted in preparing these sheets for the press.

I cannot conclude without expressing my warm gratitude to Dr Mason, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, for many corrections and suggestions adopted throughout the book; and also to my sister, Miss Hilda Gregg, for great assistance rendered in the course of its revision.

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THE DECIAN PERSECUTION.

CHAPTER I.

DECIUS.

INTRODUCTION. PANNONIA AND ILLYRICUM—DECIUS: HIS ORIGIN
—HIS FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE—HE IS PROCLAIMED EM-
PEROR—REVIVES THE CENSORSHIP—ENTERS ROME—LEAVES
FOR THE DANUBE PROVINCES — INSURRECTION OF JULIUS
VALENS—THE GOTHS—THE FINAL STRUGGLE—THE DEATH OF
DECIUS.

By the middle of the third century of our era the time had already arrived when the Roman empire, her vital forces exhausted alike by natural decay and the corruption which is at once the result and the punishment of excess, was forced to look abroad for counsel and support. The aged mother might now with justice claim from her more vigorous children some return for the gifts which she had lavished upon them in

days gone by. To them she might look for a fresh accession of vitality, for a new policy, untouched by the infection of the past. Which of her dependencies would accept the responsibility of helping to bear her burden?

Pannonia answered to the call, and Illyricum followed speedily in her train. Pannonia was the latest of the acquisitions of Rome, and still retained in full possession her natural energy.¹ From these two provinces sprang a line of Roman generals, who, in strengthening the defences of the empire, secured for themselves in turn the imperial throne.

Decius was the gift of Pannonia to Rome, while Illyricum sent Claudio, Aurelian, and Diocletian. For a period of sixty years these soldier-emperors held sway, and, notwithstanding temporary checks and serious interruptions, succeeded in effecting a continuous solidification of the empire. One hostile influence, however, impeded their progress. A conflict was inevitable between the reviving empire and a religion whose aims were also world-wide; and for ten years at the commencement of this period, and an equal number at its conclusion, Christianity was confronted by an uncompromising hostility such as it has never

¹ Schiller, p. 805.

known before or since: it was a battle between giants, and on its issue hung the mastery of mankind. But Rome was too late: the vigour of youth and purity, once hers, but long ago discarded, to her everlasting damage, now adorned her foe. There could be but one termination to the contest, and when it ceased, Christianity, in ruling the empire, ruled the world.

Caius Messius Quintus Trajanus Decius was born at Bubalia, a country town in the neighbourhood of Sirmium in Paunonia Inferior:¹ he sprang from a Roman family, or more probably, as Schiller suggests, from one which had received Roman rights. The date of his birth is uncertain, some authorities giving his age at the time of his accession as fifty, others as sixty; but this point is of little importance to our discussion. Of his early life we know nothing: the ‘Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum’ gives a large number of provincial inscriptions of the time of Maximin, in which a certain administrator of the name of Decius is recorded to have done much in the way of building bridges and making roads; but with this possible exception, we have no record of his doings until he is sent in the year 248

¹ Sext. Aur. Vict., De Cæss., 29. 1.

by the Emperor Philip to quell an insurrection in Moesia.

In this disturbed region the soldiers had given the title of Imperator to Marinus Pacatianus,¹ a taxiarch. The overthrow of this pretender gave the army a new head in the person of his conqueror; and Decius, who had set out from Italy in the full confidence of his master, was unanimously proclaimed Imperator by the soldiers. The general character of Decius leaves us little room for thinking that he was in any way a party to this new state of things;² indeed it is almost certain that nothing but the knowledge that his personal safety depended upon his accepting the purple could have induced him to violate his trust.³

His recognition by the army probably dates from A.D. 248; and if we accept this date, we shall be able to understand how it was that he held the *tribunicia potestas* four times. Whether this conjecture be correct or not, it is plain that he was not officially regarded as

¹ Cf. Eckhel, 7. 337 : "Imp. Ti. Cl. Mar. Pacatianus Aug."

² Zonaras, 12. 19.

³ Sext. Aur. Viet., however, accuses him of treachery (De Cress., 29. 1).

emperor until after the end of August 249.¹ This date is fixed for us as our superior limit by the Alexandrian coins² of the period, while the inferior limit, as we shall shortly see, is October 27, 249. We may conclude, then, that during September³ Decius, who had been employing his respite in conciliating the friendship of the provinces on the Danube, found himself confronted at Verona by Philip, who had advanced thither with his army, leaving his son at Rome. The elder Philip was killed on the field of battle, while his son was assassinated by the praetorians at Rome.⁴

Before proceeding to the capital Decius struck the key-note of his reign in a letter to

¹ Dessau, Inscr. Lat. Sel., 517: "TRIB. POT. IIII." Mommsen (Bull. dell' Inst., 1865, p. 27) conjectured that 248 was the date of his proclamation by the soldiers, 249 that of his recognition at Rome, and therefore in 250 he could be said to be trib. pot. ii. (as in Dessau, 514, 516) or trib. pot. iii. (Dessau, 518). This latter stone is, however, not official; cf. Schiller, p. 807.

² LB is the latest coin of Decius's reign: this belongs to 251, his second year, and no later in that year than August 29, when the new year begins (Sallet, Daten, p. 66).

³ Tillemont (Empereurs, iii. p. 275) concludes that Philip died between mid-August and October, basing his argument for his first limit on the laws of Philip's reign.

⁴ Cf. Aubé, L'Église et l'État, p. 8. Sext. Aur. Vict., 29.1: "Lactior hostium nece."

the Senate. The new emperor had decided to revive the censorship and vest it in that assembly, and with this object he desired them to meet on the 27th of October, and appoint their most distinguished member to the office. They assembled in the temple of Castor and Pollux, and, probably at the prompting of Decius, elected P. Licinius Valerianus.¹ For various reasons we venture to think that Gibbon, in assigning this event to the date 251, has placed it too late, more especially because it was a conciliatory measure, likely to win the favour of the Senate at the outset. Again, are we entitled totally to discredit certain edicts of persecution² which have come down to us, and in which we find the names of Decius and Valerian associated? In October 250 the persecution had wellnigh spent its force, and it is scarcely probable that if Valerian had not occupied some such commanding position, he would have been associated with Decius in originating the persecution.³ The Senate despatched to the

¹ Trebellius Pollio, Valerian, 5-7. Zonaras, 12. 20.

² Cf. Metaphrast, November 24. Cf. Appendix to chap. v., "The Form of the Edict."

³ Cf. Zonaras, 12. 20. Tillemont, Emp., iii. p. 280, actually assigns it to the following year, 251, by which time the Emperor Decius was dead.

camp the news of the election, and Decius pressed the office on the acceptance of the unwilling Valerian, who was serving with him, in a speech full of extravagant hopefulness. His policy was now declared: his overtures had been accepted by the Senate; nothing remained but to enter Rome,¹ and endure for a short season the honours that were to be thrust upon him by that obsequious body.

His full title would now be: Imperator . Cæsar Caius . Messius . Quintus . Trajanus . Decius Pius . Felix . Invictus Augustus . Pontifex Maximus . Optimus Maximusque Princeps . Tribuniciæ potestatis Pater patriæ Consul.² The title of Cæsar was without delay conferred upon his eldest son, Quintus Herennius Etruscus Messius Decius,³ who was immediately despatched to Illyricum, while Decius remained for a short time longer in Rome,⁴ devoting himself to the

¹ Eckhel, 7. 342 : "ADVENTUS AVG."

² Dessau. From an inscription (517) of 251 A.D., found near Barcino.

³ Dessau, 521. By his wife, Herennia Cupressenia Etruscilla, he had two sons, Herennius Etruscus, who was killed with him at Abrytus, and C. Valens Hostilianus, who survived them a few months.

⁴ Sext. Aur. Vict., 29.

execution of his public duties, and deliberating with Valerian and the Senate on the proposed rehabilitation of religion and morals. During this period¹ he received the gratifying news that Jotapianus, whose pretensions to power had troubled Syria and Cappadocia in the reign of Philip, had fallen before the caprice of his own soldiers.

The emperor's stay in Rome lasted in all probability until March 250. We hear of his building baths² and restoring walls in the city; and it is evident that the personal superintendence of the prosecution of his edict, coupled with the work of administrative reform, required his presence for some months at the seat of government.

Having laid the foundations of his proposed scheme of restoration, Decius found himself compelled to proceed with all haste to the provinces on the Danube. The north-eastern frontier was the most insecure of all the borders of the empire, which from this time was compelled to wage a defensive warfare against the

¹ *Sext. Aur. Vict.*, 29.

² *Chron. M. Aurel. Cassiod.*, p. 695, 2. 13. Cf. *Pomp. Lætus, Compendium.*

barbarians within the boundaries of its nominal dominions. No sooner had the title of Cæsar been conferred on his eldest son than Decius hurried him off to Illyricum, whither he himself proceeded in March 250. The territories of Illyricum and Pannonia had, without doubt, been exposed to a succession of barbarian inroads during the past two years of deadly strife for the purple; and it was no trifling danger which led Decius to turn his steps again to the province of his birth.¹

His departure was the signal for the outbreak of trouble at Rome also, for hardly had he left the capital when the news reached him of the insurrection of Julius Valens. This outbreak was probably confined to Italy, and was speedily suppressed.²

¹ Cf. Schiller, i. p. 804.

² Sext. Aur. Vict., 29: "Decio quam potuit maturime Roma digresso, Julius Valens cupientissimo volgo Imperium cepit: verum utrique [Valens and Priscus in Macedonia] mox cæsi." Mommsen (Bull. dell' Inst., 1865, p. 27) concludes from the erasure of the name of Decius on an inscription from Falerii that the insurrection broke out in Italy. The inscription is given in Dessau, I. L. S., 518. Besides, it is not likely to have occurred in Illyria, as one author relates, where Etruscus already was, and Decius had just arrived. Cf. Schiller, i. p. 805.

The Goths meanwhile had seized the opportunity presented to them by the concentration of the Roman troops at the heart of the empire, and under the command of Cniva had united with the Carpi and invaded Mœsia¹ and Thracia,² which they found without their due complement of troops. They spent the year 250 in ravaging the country, and collecting such booty as could be acquired without extensive siege operations, at the same time preparing to invest Nicopolis, an important city on the Jatrus.

The emperor, having secured the borders of Illyricum and Pannonia, passed northwards across the Danube into the territory of the Eastern Germans, who were menacing Dacia on the west. This campaign terminated successfully for Decius and his son, whose achievements are recorded on a series of commemorative coins.³ From German territory he entered Dacia,

¹ Mommsen, *Provinces*, ii. p. 240.

² Lactantius, *De mort. persec.*, § 4. Pomponius Lætus, *Compendium*: “Una cum filio ad liberandas Thracias profectus est, nam Scythæ et navalibus et terrestribus copiis omnia infestabant.

³ Eckhel, 7. 345, “Imp. Cæ. Tra. Dec. Ang. Victoria Germanica”; and 394, “Imp. C. Q. Her. Etr. Mess. Deci. Aug. Victoria Germanica.” Görres arbitrarily, it would seem, in an article in the ‘*Zeitschr. f. Wiss. Theol.*,’ 1879, says that the younger Decius was not Augustus till 251.

which he succeeded in restoring to quiet and prosperity.¹

The winter found the Goths hemmed in between the Danube and the sea, and with an energetic soldier like Trebonianus Gallus, the then governor of Mœsia, occupying an excellent position in the heart of the country, Decius might reasonably look forward to a favourable issue of the campaign in the following year.

Early in 251 the Goths divided themselves into two large bodies; one of these remained in Mœsia, while the other went southwards into Thrace. The northern force laid siege at once to Nicopolis, which Trebonianus Gallus had put into a state of defence. The Goths now found themselves in a trap, with Gallus in front, and Decius, who had thrown his forces across the Dannbe, in the rear. In these circumstances they were forced to retreat to Philippopolis, after losing, it is said, 30,000 men. Here they found their southern force, with which they effected a

¹ Dessau, I. L. S. Decius is called “restitutor Daciарum.” Eckhel, 7. 343, gives a coin DACIA, and another with DACIA FELIX. Cohen, p. 193, gives a coin of this reign with PANNONIE on it. He gives many others with (GENIVS) EXERC. ILLYRICIANI. Dacia was an easy prey to the Goths, who would overrun it on their way to the fertile territories of Mœsia and Thracia.

junction before the beleaguered city. With admirable foresight they took no steps to block up the passes by which they had traversed the Balkan range, and Decius, following them precipitately, and without due caution, encamped at Bercea in Macedonia, sixty miles from Philippopolis. Here he was surprised by Cniva, who made a sudden descent on his encampment, and took him entirely unawares, with the result that the imperial forces were routed, as many as 100,000 Romans being left dead on the field.¹

At this juncture Lucius Priscus, governor of Macedonia, handed over Philippopolis to the Goths on the condition that they should accord him their protection while he created a diversion in their favour by assuming the title of Caesar.² A tradition is extant that he was a brother of the late emperor, Philip the Arabian;³ but it is hardly likely that Decius would have suffered so near a relative of his predecessor to retain a position of such importance. He was at once

¹ Ammianus Marc., xxxi. 5.

² Sext. Aur. Vict., 29 : "Lucio Prisco, qui Macedonas praesidatu regebat, delata dominatio, Gothorum concursu, postquam direptis Thracie plerisque illo [i.e., in Maeonianam] pervenerant."

³ The story is given in Zosimus, i. 19, and is accepted by Gibbon.

declared a public enemy,¹ and was without delay deposed.²

There is no reason to believe that Decius ever saw Rome again after he had set out for Illyricum in April 250. Nevertheless, he must have realised that his Dacian success in that year would be altogether discounted in the eyes of a fickle populace by his defeat at Berœa; and his prolonged absence from the capital, coupled with the news of the rebellion, however speedily suppressed, of Lucius Priscus, could scarcely fail to obliterate the grateful memory of his services. Spurred on by the thought, he resolved on a desperate plan. Immediately after the rout at Berœa he had set about repairing his losses, and now made his way with all speed to the Danube. Here he determined to strike a blow at the Goths, who were moving northwards, encumbered with their vast spoils, which they were anxious to deposit in safety on the northern side of the

¹ *Sext. Aur. Vict.*, 29. 2.

² Probably by the Roman element within the city. This account is based generally upon Dexippus Ath. in Müller, 'F. H. G.', fr. 19. 20, and Jordanes, 'De orig. actibusque Getarum,' § 18 f. The chronology throughout is very involved. Cf. also Mommsen, *Provinces*, ii. 240 f., and Schiller, i. p. 806.

river. But misfortune dogged his footsteps. The treachery of a subordinate officer was his undoing, and the example set by his own rise was followed in his fall.

The last scene of the drama was enacted on Scythian soil.¹ At Abrytus² Decius confronted the victorious Goths, and, misled by a feigned retreat on the part of the enemy, a stratagem suggested to them by his own second-in-command, Gallus, perished with his son in a morass. His cold philosophy did not fail him even when the news was brought of his son's death. "It only means one soldier less in the army," was his characteristic reply. He was himself killed shortly afterwards: neither his body nor that of his son was ever recovered. Gallus received the purple as the result of his treachery,³ and secured immunity from Gothic invasions by a renewal of the shameful tribute, which Philip had refused to pay.⁴

The Goths had inflicted on the Roman arms a disgrace hitherto unparalleled; a Roman emperor

¹ In the marshes of Dobrudsha, Schiller, i. p. 806. Bury, in his edition of Gibbon, i. p. 249, seems to agree with this view.

² Sext. Aur. Vict., 29.

³ Zosimus, i. 23.

⁴ Cf. Schiller, i. p. 808.

had been defeated and slain by a foreign enemy on Roman soil.

Decius had reigned barely two years, dying in July or August 251.¹

From the few indications which remain to us we should be inclined to judge that the last and fatal year of his reign terminated a period within which the empire had enjoyed a reasonable measure of peace coupled with considerable prosperity.²

¹ Sallet, *Daten*, p. 66 f., gives Alexandrian coins of no later date than the second year of Decius's reign—*i.e.*, L.B. The year, for this purpose, ended on August 29.

² Cf. Eckhel, 7. 343, “ABUNDANTIA AVG.”; and Cohen, p. 189, “FELICITAS SÆCVLI”; p. 195, “PAX ETERNA”; p. 196, ‘VBERITAS AVG.’

Note.—We have been unable to suggest with any reasonable certainty a date for the expedition of Decius to Gaul.

Eutropius (*Brev.*, i. 9, cp. 4. ed. Bipont) says that Decius had to put down a sedition in Gaul, but whether this occurred before his return to Rome after the battle with Philip, or later in his reign, we can find no means of deciding.

CHAPTER II.

DECIUS (*continued*)—HIS CHARACTER AND AIMS.

DIFFICULTY OF DEPICTING HIS CHARACTER—DECIUS AN IDEALIST—TRIES TO HEAD A CRUSADE AGAINST THE PREVAILING NON-ROMAN INFLUENCES—A DISAPPOINTED MAN—A MAN OF VIRTUOUS LIFE—NO STATESMAN—HIS ASSUMPTION OF THE NAME TRAJAN—HIS AIMS—MORAL REFORMS.

THE writer who would depict the character of Decius is confronted by a serious difficulty at the outset of his task. In addition to the remarkable paucity of trustworthy evidence, the writers from whom details may be taken range themselves with unswerving constancy in two camps, Christian sources representing the emperor as the incarnation of all that is evil, while heathen testimony supplies a diametrically opposite view. Such being the case, it is necessary to discriminate between the evidence of those whose interest it is to blacken his character or whose hostility would colour their judgment, and that

of others who are merely chronicling the facts for an audience of unprejudiced readers. We must therefore exercise great caution in accepting the statements of such writers as Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyprian, or Lactantius,¹ seeing that we find in direct opposition to their accounts the testimony of Zosimus and Vopiscus.² No estimate of his character will be complete that is not largely based on a consideration of his political purposes and aspirations.

Decius was a man of high aims, and of the type of disposition which, finding satisfaction in solitude, is inclined to live as it were in the clouds, and thus to form unchecked theories and ideals of its own. Such a temperament, united to a strong and severe nature, almost of necessity breeds a reformer. And such was Decius: the reforming spirit breathes in every word of the speech to Valerian³ on his election to the censorship, to which we have already alluded. To

¹ Lactantius, *De mort. persec.*, 4, says, “Exstitit . . . execrabile animal Decius.” Cyprian, Ep. 22 (H., p. 533, 11): “Maior anguis, metator antichristi.”

² Zosimus, i. 21: Δέκιος—πάσαις διαπρέπων ταῖς ἀπεραῖς. Vop. Aur., ep. 42: “Decios quorum et vita et mors veteribus comparanda est.”

³ This speech is taken from the account of Valerian in the Augustan history.

quote Gibbon's translation: “‘ Happy Valerian,’ said the prince to his distinguished subject, ‘ happy in the general approbation of the Senate and the Roman Republic! Accept the censorship of mankind, and judge of our manners. You will select those who deserve to continue members of the Senate. You will restore the equestrian order to its ancient splendour; you will improve the revenue, yet moderate the public burdens. You will distinguish into regular classes the various and infinite multitude of citizens, and accurately review the military strength, the wealth, the virtue, and the resources of Rome. Your decisions shall obtain the force of laws. The army, the palace, the ministers of justice, and the great officers of the empire, are all subject to your tribunal. None are exempted, excepting only the ordinary consuls, the prefect of the city, the king of the sacrifices, and (as long as she preserves her chastity inviolate) the eldest of the vestal virgins. Even these few, who may not dread the severity, will anxiously solicit the esteem, of the Roman Censor.’”

If the speech here given represents at all closely the emperor's actual words, our estimate of the character of his political idealism can scarcely be incorrect. We cannot help wonder-

ing whether, previous to his sudden exaltation, he had not been a complete stranger to Rome. Does not his enthusiasm savour rather of a contemplative life that had been spent in his provincial villa, far away from the enervating atmosphere and despondent weariness of Roman thought? Was not his mind too fresh, was not the man himself too poor in experience, to control the fortunes of an empire withering with age?

His aims were serious and patriotic, and to the aid of his enthusiasm he brought all the energy of a nature well disciplined and unflinching in its severity.¹ But for the attainment of success circumstances must meet the reformer half-way, and this was not the case with Decius. He had come too late, and the world knew it: to us he seems like the Brutus of an age outworn.

Decius represents a momentary reaction towards everything that was Roman from all that was most markedly the reverse. He clung with the inborn tenacity of his character to the antique traditions of the mother-city, and was convinced that in a return to the old Roman idea lay the only hope of salvation for an orientalised empire. Religion had degenerated into a mere congeries

¹ Cf. Uhlhorn, Kampf, p. 334.

of foreign rites and cults: morality could gain nothing from the East, and was in abeyance. The only creed which aimed at a moral life had attained such influence as to threaten the very cause for which he was contending; and therefore the theorist decided to annihilate a movement which a more practical man might have turned to the advantage of the empire and society.¹ Defeat was inevitable, but with a cynical resolution he entered the arena, hoping fondly to suppress by means of a sweeping edict a faith of two centuries' growth.

The world turned on the failure of his proscription of Christianity the same indifferent eyes that would have scanned his revival of the censorship, had he lived long enough to give it practical effect. Disappointment marked his course in domestic as in external politics. The Christians attributed his defeat to divine vengeance; a later age would have wondered had he triumphed.²

We are entitled to see in him, however he

¹ Cf. Plummer, *The Church and the Early Fathers*.

² Cf. Dr F. Görres in F. X. Kraus's 'Real-Encyclopädie.' That Decius lived amid notions of the past is shown by the relation in which he stood to the Senate, and the influence he gave it. Cf. Pomp. Laet., Compendium: "Cupiens nihil agere nisi quantum senatus juberet, censuram amplissimo ordini permisit." Cf. Uhlihorn, Kampf, p. 334.

may have been led away by his enthusiasm for ancient standards, one of the noblest representatives of later heathenism, animated by the same virtuous principles in private as in public life.¹ The testimony of his coins, and that already adduced from heathen writers, is indirectly confirmed by the silence of Christian authorities, who bring no definite accusation against his moral character.

Whatever varying opinions may exist regarding Decius as a man, there can be but one respecting his reign. As a statesman he was absolutely unsuccessful. His attempt to revive the censorship was anachronistic: the one force which could have assisted his restoration of

¹ Cf. Treb. Poll., *Claudius*, ep. 13: "Decius Iunperator . . . et virtutem et verecundiam Claudii publice prædicavit." Cf. Eckhel, 7. 345, "PVDICITIA AVGVSTI"; p. 343, "CONCORDIA AVGG.;" p. 342, "LIBERALITAS AVGG. (Decius et Herennius congiario presidentes)." Cf. Pomp. Læt., Compendium: "Ad amplissimas dignitates non ambitio, non empta suffragia, non corruptæ amicitiae, sed boni mores perduxere." Decius was a religious man: he paid special attention, it would seem, to the cult of Mercury: cf. Cohen, p. 195, "PIETAS AVGG.," with a picture of Mercury half-erect. Cf. Pomp. Læt., Compendium: "Decius, cuius vita sanctissimis institutis nunquam adversata est." Cf. Sext. Aur. Vict., 29: "Vir artibus cunctis virtutibusque instructus, placidus et communis domi."

society he was obliged, for the sake of consistency, to combat; hence he was foredoomed to failure. His lot was indeed hard. The heathen reformer's attacks passed like a dread storm over the Church, but it rose triumphant and mocked him: before he could assail corruption at home, a foreign enemy confronted him, and he fell.

His reputation as a general has doubtless suffered through his ill-fated Gothic campaign; but here again his ill-fortune pursued him. His successes against the Dacians and Germans were forgotten when the tide turned: his life was lost at a critical moment, and the opportunity of recovering his renown was gone. There is little reason to doubt that had he lived longer he would have anticipated the successes of Aurelian,¹ and prevented Rome from slipping back into the position of a tributary to the Goths.² A courageous soldier and experienced general, he possessed in no small degree the stoical calmness of his old Roman namesake.³

¹ Cf. *Sext. Aur. Vict.*, 29: "In armis promptissimus."

² As happened immediately, under Trebouianus Gallus.

³ When he heard of his son's death in the course of the battle at Abrytns, he said quietly: "Detimentum unius militis parum sibi videri," and went on fighting with renewed energy (*Sext. Aur. Vict.*, 29).

He had endeared himself deeply to the Illyrian army, which took the lead in proclaiming him Imperator.¹

It is impossible to fix accurately the time at which he assumed the name of Trajanus. Whether he recognised in himself qualities resembling those of Trajan, or whether he saw in him a model of princely excellence, we cannot decide; but the likeness will be apparent if we consider the two emperors side by side. The character of Decius we have already traced; that of Trajan has been drawn for us by M. de Pressensé:²—

“Trajan was neither a Nero nor a Domitian. He was a man of elevated mind, . . . an illustrious general, a consummate politician. He allowed himself to be guided by reasons of state; but these seemed to incline him to persecution. He had set himself the task of regenerating Roman society, he was the great protector of paganism; Pliny, in his Panegyric, praises him for his piety. A scornful scepticism

¹ Cohen, p. 189, gives large numbers of coins with such inscriptions as (GENIVS) EXERC. ILLYRICIANI. Cf. Pomp. Læt., Compendium: “Qui a militibus ante Imperator factus fuerat, a Senatu Augustus est appellatus.”

² De Pressensé, *Histoire des Trois Premiers Siècles*, t. ii. ep. 3.

lurked beneath this seeming devotion; but it was all the more needful, from a political point of view, to encourage the revival of the ancient faiths among the people.”¹

A short survey only is necessary of the plan which the emperor pursued in attempting to give practical effect to his great scheme. The Roman idea of the State was that government and religion should be one—the State an idol before which every citizen should bow, the national religion an institution sharing the sanctity and inviolability of the State²—and that this union, so long as it remained intact, would guarantee purity of morals.

But what did Decius find? In religion every man did that which was right in his own eyes; morality was at a discount; the government was in the hands of a capricious soldiery. On the borders were the barbarians, growing bolder with

¹ Aubé, p. 8 ff., in discussing Decius suggests that he may have been a sceptic in religion. We doubt it: his coins with religious inscriptions would make him out to be either a devout worshipper or a hypocrite; and Decius was certainly not the latter. Zosimus, whose testimony, however, must be received with great caution, says, i. 23, Δεκίω . . . ἔριστα βέβαιλευκότι τέλος τοιδνδε συνέβη.

² Cf. Peters, art. on Decius in Wetzer and Welte’s Kirchen-Lexicon.

each successful incursion ; at home were religions collected from every corner of the East, and above them all rose one, the votaries of which, while living a peaceable life, were yet a constant menace to public authority and institutions : its aim was world-wide, it could brook no rival.¹

His first measure was to set on foot a reform in the higher ranks of society : this he did by pressing upon the Senate the election of a censor.

This step, followed as it was by other smaller concessions,² was conciliatory in its effect, as the Senate was thereby reinvested with the moral guardianship of the State.

The principle of the division of power between a military and a civil Cæsar was not new ;³ still, to go back to the censorship, and at the same time considerably to widen its sphere,⁴ was a dangerous experiment. Had not Decius been spared by his early death the pain of seeing the failure of his measure, friction would inevitably

¹ Cf. Aubé, *L'Église et l'État*, p. 6.

² Cf. Pomponius Laetus, *Compendium* : "Nam jus quintæ relationis et proconsulare imperium, unde Augusti omnes pro consulibus, nec non et jus tribuniciae potestatis, quod Augustus primus sibi vindicaverat, arbitrio SRQR permisit."

³ *E.g.*, insert under Pupienus and Balbinus.

⁴ See the speech of Decius to Valerian earlier in this chapter. Valerian, on his accession, reduced the scope of the Senate's and the censor's action.

have arisen which would have necessitated the weakening of the censor's power.

It is probable that both parties felt an equal interest in the new scheme: the Senate was pleased to welcome any proposal from the emperor that was calculated to show how indispensable a portion of the State machinery was the senatorial order; while the emperor, who was not well versed in the art of civil administration, desired to secure the stability of the revived office by basing it on the acquiescence of so venerable a body. His penetration was singularly at fault: he was attempting to impose on a universal empire the organisation fitted for a small state.¹ Had he lived longer, experience would doubtless have shown him that his talents were better suited for the camp than for the Senate.

His attitude towards religion and Christianity will demand a separate chapter.²

¹ This section on the censorship is reproduced from Schiller, i. pp. 807, 808.

² Chapter iv.

CHAPTER III.

THE EMPIRE AND THE CHURCH BEFORE 249 A.D.

TRAJAN — HADRIAN — ANTONINUS PIUS — COMMODUS — SEVERUS —
CARACALLA — ALEXANDER SEVERUS — MAXIMIN — GORDIAN III.
— PHILIP THE ARABIAN — OUTBREAK AT ALEXANDRIA — WAS
PHILIP A CHRISTIAN? — CONCLUSION.

BEFORE considering the attitude of Decius towards the Christian Church, it will be well to examine briefly that of the emperors who preceded him.

Not until the time of Trajan (112 A.D.) was the legal basis for future official action respecting Christianity clearly defined. It is true that Nero and Domitian had recognised the existence of the sect: the former had taken advantage of the popular reports which ascribed flagrant immorality and a blind hatred of humanity to the professors of the faith,¹ to punish them for an

¹ Tacitus, Annals, 15. 44. Cf. Ramsay, C. in R. E., p. 242.

imaginary complicity in the burning of Rome.¹ Domitian was not a general persecutor, but his fury exhausted itself upon those in high places, his actions being as capricious as they were unjust.²

By the time of Trajan, the fall of Jerusalem and the rapid growth of the Christians, combined with the Jewish repudiation of any connection with them, had made it obvious that Jews and Christians were entirely different in religion, aims, and legal standing. An indication of the difficulties consequent on this state of things is to be found in the official correspondence of Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan in 112 A.D.;³ the outcome of which was that rules were laid down for the guidance of provincial governors, which were not actually repealed till the edict of Gallienus in 261 A.D. The change now recognised was this: hitherto, as much as at any later period, Christianity had been an “illicit religion,” not having received official sanction: henceforward Christianity was a crime. No in-

¹ Tacitus, *l. c.*

² Among his victims were his relatives Flavius Clemens and Flavia Domitilla. Cf. Eus., *H. E.*, 3, 18; Suet., *Domitian*, ep. 15.

³ Pliny, *Epp.* 96, 97. Professor Ramsay's conclusions on this correspondence are very valuable (*C. in R. E.*, cp. x., and esp. p. 223).

formal accusation was to be received, but a formal indictment and conviction were to be followed by summary punishment. No search was to be made for Christians, and any who were accused were given by the governor the opportunity of denying the charge. If they were willing to invoke the gods, to offer incense before the image of the emperor, and to curse Christ, they were released; otherwise death was the penalty for their defiant constancy to this "unsettling superstition." The Christians were by this imperial rescript secured a fair trial, and given full opportunity of recantation. Strangely enough, its provisions proved at once a safeguard and a disadvantage. It now lay with the individual governor to decide on the interpretation of the law. A man of clement character need take no steps in the matter, yet a popular outbreak might force him to move; there were, in fact, many possibilities of fear and few of hope under the new rules. A governor who wished to conciliate local feeling, or to obtain recognition from a superior, would find no means more likely to give pleasure, and none more ready to his hand,¹ than action against this unpopular sect.

¹ Cf. the attack by Serenianus, in Maximin's reign (Cyprian, Ep. 75, § 10).

To the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, which together extended over forty-three years, belong the Apologies of Quadratus and Aristides, which were presented to Hadrian, and that of Justin Martyr, which was presented to his successor. The Church was making great advances¹ in Hadrian's time; but although we have reason to believe² that the emperor himself was no persecutor, there were certainly local governors to whom it seemed that the goodwill of their provinces was best to be secured by giving victims to the popular fury.³ The fact also of the writing of the Apologies would seem to be sufficient evidence for the existence of some ground of complaint. The first year of the reign of Antoninus Pius was marked by the martyrdom of Telesphorus of Rome: riots broke out against the Church in Greece,⁴ while the Christians of Asia appealed for protection.⁵ It was in all probability one of the waves of this tide of popular excitement which passed over Smyrna and occasioned the outbreak which issued in the death of Polycarp.⁶

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 4. 7.

² Tertullian, Apol., 5.

³ Jerome, Ep. 84. ⁴ Eusebius, H. E., 4. 26. ⁵ Ibid., 4. 12.

⁶ The proceedings were of a thoroughly judicial nature, although set on foot by the people. Cf. Martyrdom of Polycarp, Lightfoot, Ap. Fathers.

The reign of Marcus Aurelius was the most inauspicious that the Christians had yet known. With his connivance, perhaps even with his authority, various edicts were published hostile to the Church. By these a premium was set on delation:¹ informers were to receive the confiscated property of those Christians whose condemnation they secured. The emperor, in developing the principles laid down by Trajan, gave his sanction to the popular movement against Christianity. Evidently the Stoic saw no contradiction involved in the contrast between his words and deeds, when he could speak of himself as one whose hands were free from blood, and at the same time issue edicts the outcome of which was torture and bloodshed.²

The Christians were henceforth to be sought out, and for the previous prescription of execu-

¹ A step in advance. Hadrian's rescript to Miucius Fundanus (*circa* 124 A.D.) had merely provided for the punishment of false accusers.

² Neander, i. p. 147, gives the following edict from the Acts of St Symphorian, which he suggests may really belong to this emperor's reign: "Aurelianus [Aurelius?] Imp. omnibus administratoribus suis atque rectoribus. Comperimus ab his, qui se temporibus nostris Christianos dicunt, legum precepta violari. Hos comprehensos, nisi diis nostris sacrificaverint, diversis punite cruciatibus, quatenus habeat districtio prolata justitiam, et in resecundis criminibus ultio terminata jam finem."

tion without torture in the case of those who steadfastly adhered to their profession, there was now substituted a series of attempts to force them by torture to deny their faith.¹

Rome, Gaul,² and Asia Minor³ were visited by the storm, and it is probable that they did not stand alone. Numerous Apologies were presented to the emperor, the most noteworthy of which was that written by Melito of Sardis, who refers piteously to the confiscatory clauses of the edicts.⁴

Persecution raged less hotly during the last years of this reign, and ceased upon the accession of Commodus, who under the influence of his mistress Marcia⁵ allowed the presence of Christians about his person,⁶ and released many who had been condemned to the mines. An unsettled period of political disorder was succeeded by

¹ Neander, i. p. 146.

² E.g., the martyrdoms at Lugduuum and Vienna (Eusebius, H. E., 5. 1).

³ See the Apology of Melito of Sardis, Eus., H. E., 4. 26.

⁴ Eusebius, *l. c.* Apollinarius of Hierapolis presented an Apology; and 5. 17, Miltiades, *πρὸς τοὺς κοσμικοὺς ἀρχοντας ὑπὲρ ἡς μετήει φιλοσοφίας πεπόηται ἀπολογίαν.*

⁵ φιλάθεος πάλλαξ. (Hippolytus, Ref., ix. 12. p. 288.)

⁶ Cf. Neander, i. p. 146. Cf. also Irenæus, Adv. Hær., iv. 30 (written c. 185): “Quid autem et hi qui in regali aula sunt fideles?”

the reign of Septimius Severus, who permitted general liberty of conscience until 202 A.D. The past twenty years had witnessed numerous accessions to the Jewish and Christian creeds; but hitherto Severus, whose relations with the Senate were strained, and who was in consequence inclined to disregard the interests of that home of heathenism,¹ had taken no notice of the inroads of these religions. It was, in fact, a matter of common knowledge that after the renewal in 198 of the law dealing with religious colleges the Christians were registered under the head of "burial clubs."² But in the year 202, in the view, possibly, of restraining Christianity and Judaism from making such encroachments as to eclipse the religions of heathenism,³ the emperor issued a proclamation forbidding proselytism on behalf of either of those creeds.⁴ The necessity for such an edict seems to show that Christianity

¹ On the other hand, Decius, who wished to conciliate the Senate, was a persecutor.

² Cf. Doucet, p. 163, where he quotes de Rossi, R.S., i. p. 105. Tertullian, Apologet., 39. Cf. Ramsay, C. in R. E., p. 359.

³ Cf. Baur, Part v. § 2.

⁴ Spartian, Severus, 17. "Iudeos fieri sub gravi poena vetuit: idem de Christianis sanxit." This is the first official distinction we possess between Jews and Christians. Cf., however, Ramsay, C. in R. E., p. 194.

had latterly enjoyed a tacit recognition ; but now pestilence and barbarian inroads made men ask what were the causes of these and other troubles. The only answer was that the gods must have been estranged from the nation by some grievous fault, and the easiest way of recovering their favour was to persecute the adherents of the upstart religion, who repudiated the claims of civil duties and imperial defence, and arrogated to themselves the right of laying down the principles of morals and religion.¹ This was the cause of the edict of Severus, which was accompanied probably by hostile action on the part of certain provincial governors, acting on their own initiative or that of the populace. In Severus we see again a true persecutor,² whose rigour³ produced the impression that Antichrist must be close at hand.⁴ The storm raged with especial fury in Egypt and Africa,⁵ and there were many examples of individual constancy, among which should be noticed the martyrdoms of Leonides,

¹ Cf. Schiller, i. p. 898.

² Sulp. Sev., 2. 32.

³ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 7.

⁴ Doulcet (p. 165) suggests that persecution was aimed at the catechumens. Such class persecutions took place under Maximin, and perhaps Decius, who directed them against the clergy, and Valerian, who prescribed penalties for different civil classes and ranks.

⁵ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 1.

the father of Origen, and of Perpetua and Felicitas at Carthage.

The reigns of Caracalla, Macrinus, and Elagabalus passed uneventfully for the Christian Church: the last-named emperor was too much engrossed by the sensual orgies of his Syrian worship to pay any attention to a question more attractive to politicians than to a votary of pleasure.¹ It still rested with the individual governor of a province to decide on the interpretation to be given to the anti-Christian regulations, and we hear that some magistrates even devised expedients whereby, without open violation of the law, they might spare the lives of Christians arraigned before their tribunals.²

During the reign of Alexander Severus (222-234 A.D.)³ the Church continued to enjoy its season of rest.⁴ The emperor, who began his

¹ It is curious to notice that the emperors of the worst moral characters gave the Church the least anxiety.

² Tertullian, *Ad Scap.*, 4. Cincius Severus and Vespronius Candidus did their best to suggest subterfuges for the Christians.

³ Schiller, i. p. 783 u.

⁴ Ælius Lampridius, *Alex. Sev.*, ep. 22: “Christianos esse passus est.” Cf. Eusebius, *H. E.*, 7. 10, where he is probably referred to as one of the emperors: “οἱ λεχθέντες ἀναφανδὸν Χριστιανοὶ γεγονένται.” Doulcet says that at this time churches began to appear inside cities.

reign at the age of fourteen, never revolted from the guidance of his mother, Julia Mammaea, whose counsels were attended with better success than those which Julia Mæsa had offered to Elagabalus.¹

The emperor's preference for things oriental was clearly marked; the Syrian element was as strongly developed in him as in any of his predecessors, while his own prepossessions were supported by the powerful influence which was successively exercised by the women of the house of Severus over their male relations. Hence, with the diminution of the imperial interest in things essentially Roman, we can see a corresponding advance towards a cosmopolitanism which, although not positively attached to Christianity, was by no means opposed to it. In this reign accusations against the Christiaus based on the charge of *maiestas* ceased to be put forward,² but Christianity was not yet made a *religio licita* — a step which the emperor was far from strong enough to take in face of the passive strength of heathenism: indeed, it was under Alexander that Ulpian drew up his tractate

¹ Herod., 6, 1. 1.

² Cod. Just., i., ad leg. Jul. Majest. a. 224 [x. 8], in Le Blant, 362 n. : “*Maiestatis crimina cessant meo saeculo.*”

'*De officio proconsulis*,' summarising the imperial rescripts directed against the Christians before the middle of the third century. The emperor's mother, whose religious feelings inclined towards an eclectic monotheism gathered out of the many cults of the day, held conversations with Origen; while we read that Alexander, whose household contained many Christians,¹ caused a Christian maxim to be inscribed on various public buildings.

The death of Alexander and his mother at the hands of the soldiery² on the Rhine brought to an end the liberal rule of the house of Severus, and a sharp reaction followed.³ The Senate, the influence of which had gradually been reviving, was rudely set at nought, and the army stood forth as the source of power.

The new-comer, Maximin, was a Thracian peasant by birth and a soldier by profession. He had never filled a public office before the army proclaimed him Imperator in the year 234, and was so illiterate as to be unable to speak Latin correctly. The circumstances of his elevation marked him out as an opponent of the sena-

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 28.

² Sext. Aur. Vict., *De Caess.*, 24. 4.

³ Cf. Schiller, i. pp. 765-771, and pp. 897-900; and Neander, i. p. 170 ff.

torial body: the army gave him the title of Augustus, and it was in the presence of a military assembly that he associated with himself, as joint-ruler, his son, on whom he had bestowed an excellent education.¹ It is probable that his reversal of the policy of Alexander was due not so much to any rancour against him as a man,² as to a radical opposition to his principles, intensified by the knowledge that his own character would inevitably make him unpopular with all those who had enjoyed the favour of his gentle predecessor. Aware as he was of the patronage which the bishops of the Christian Church had received from Alexander, he must have anticipated that, so long as they enjoyed their former liberty of speaking and teaching, the whole weight of their influence would be thrown into the balance against him, and for this reason he decided to order their execution. He was, moreover, not ignorant that the household of Alexander contained a large Christian element.³

Here was a persecution aimed solely at a particular class, that of the rulers of the Church

¹ Schiller, pp. 783-795.

² Eusebius, H. E., 6. 28 : ὃς δὴ κατὰ κοτὸν πρὸς τὸν Ἀλεξάνδρου οἶκον.

³ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 28.

Maximin had no desire to annihilate Christianity: his object was merely repressive. From this time forward every emperor was forced to take a side in the struggle: if he did not show himself hostile to Christianity, he was held to be favourable to it.¹ But in Maximin the spirit of the army took bodily shape;² in the army the old Roman superstition was strong, and the military mind had no sympathy for monotheistic religions which led men to seek immunity from service. But the efforts of Maximin were not well supported; public opinion refused to be coerced into intolerance, and with the exception of Rome and Cæsarea in Palestine, we hear of no place where the imperial edict was put into effect. From Rome, Pontianus and Hippolytus were deported to Sardinia, but at Cæsarea the officials were so lukewarm in their efforts that Origen found it possible to escape. At Cæsarea in Cappadocia, however, the fugitive found that a popular outbreak had arisen, caused by a series of earthquakes in the district, which had en-

¹ Cf. Aubé, p. 165.

² Schiller, i. p. 903. Decius also was a genuine representative of the soldiers' creed; cf. Jordanes, Get., 18. 103: "Qui locus hodieque Decii ara dicitur, eo quod ibi ante pugnam mirabiliter idolis immolasset."

couraged the governor to make scapegoats of the Christians; this danger, again, it was possible to escape by passing to another place.¹ Elsewhere no attack upon the Christians is heard of; in fact, Gordian's proconsulate (236, 237) in Africa was very favourable to the Church, while persecution must have speedily ceased even in Rome, where Fabianus was appointed bishop in 236. The stress cannot have been very severe, as Eusebius has no names of martyrs to record, and we hear of but few confessors.²

This period of unrest terminated with the death of Maximin at the hands of his discontented troops, and during the next few months the political atmosphere was too threatening to allow of any special interference with the Christians. Five aspirants³ to the purple had succumbed, before Gordian III., a boy of fourteen, was saluted as Augustus by the soldiers, A.D. 238, apparently in opposition to the will of the Senate.

¹ Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 75.

² Sulp. Sev., Chr. ii. 32. Cf. Görres in F. X. Kraus, Real-Encyclopädie, i. p. 230. Neumann, p. 225 ff., and Aubé, p. 167 f. Eusebius, H. E., 6. 28, gives the names of only Ambrosius and Protoctetus.

³ Maximus (son of Maximin), Pupienus, Balbinus, Gordian I., Gordian II.

His reign is shrouded in almost total darkness; we know only that about the beginning of 242 he married Furia Sabina Tranquillina,¹ whose father was immediately advanced to a high position, and installed as chief adviser of the young emperor. The death of this counsellor in 243 was followed by the elevation to the same office of M. Julius Philippus, an Arabian. The newcomer had no scruples about pointing out to the army the utter incapacity of Gordian in military matters, and pressure was brought to bear on the emperor to make Philip joint-ruler with himself. Not unnaturally he demurred to setting up so powerful a rival, with the result that the army took the matter into its own hands, and, killing Gordian, transferred the purple to Philip at the beginning of 244 A.D.² Philip bestowed the title of Augustus on his son in 247, and celebrated the festival of the thousandth anniversary of the foundation of Rome with great pomp in 248. The later years of his reign were marked by various disastrous inroads of the barbarians on the north, and by the appearance of several pretenders to the imperial title—Jotapianus in

¹ Zosimus, i. 17.

² The ‘Historia Augusta’ fails us from the reign of Gordian III. until that of Valerian.

Syria,¹ Pacatianus Marinus in Mœsia,² and finally, Trajanus Decius, who alone succeeded in making good his claim.³ It seems that Egypt was visited at this time by a pestilence, which carried off some of the officials of the Church at Alexandria.⁴

Since the time of Maximin the Christians had been entirely undisturbed, but in 248 a terrible outbreak of popular fury occurred in Alexandria. This year⁵ marks the border-line between two periods in the history of the Church—that of official toleration and popular dislike, and that, on the other hand, of popular sympathy and official disfavour.

It was no imperial edict that fired the excitable mob of Alexandria, but the rhapsodies of a frenzied poet who played upon the popular superstition. In a letter to the Bishop of Antioch,⁶ the Bishop Dionysius describes vividly some of the scenes then enacted, and adds that no sooner had the mob been forced by exhaustion to cease from its attacks than the news arrived that the sympathetic rule of Philip was at an end,⁷ while

¹ Cohen, p. 229, gives three coins with his name.

² Zosimus, i. 20.

³ Cf. Schiller, i. pp. 795-803.

⁴ Eusebius, H. E., 7. 11. 24. ⁵ Cf. Neumann, p. 254.

⁶ In Eusebius, H. E., 6. 41.

⁷ Eusebius, *l. c.*: ἡ τῆς βασιλείας ἐκείνης τῆς εὐμενεστέρας ἥμῖν μεταβολὴ.

the new emperor's unfriendly attitude gave the signal for general alarm.

It is necessary to pause for a moment and inquire whether the Emperor Philip was a Christian or not. A tradition to this effect is first given in Eusebius,¹ and is repeated by Chrysostom,² while it appears again in the Alexandrian Chronicle and in Orosius.³ The whole story is therefore, in all probability, to be traced to Eusebius, who dared not relate it as a fact, but left the matter open to debate, prefixing his remarks with the words, "The saying goes." The entire silence preserved by Origen, and the fact that Decius did not find Christianity a *religio licita*, serve to throw doubt upon the legend. On the other hand, the evidence in support of it is as follows: Eusebius,⁴ writing of Valerian, remarks of him that at first he was "as favourable as any of the emperors who had been openly called Christian," and these could only have been Alexander Severus and Philip. In another passage he tells that there were extant in his day two letters—one from Origen to Philip, and

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 34.

² Chrysostom, Adv. Julianum et Gentes, 6.

³ Chron. Alex., ed. 1615, p. 630. Orosius, 7. 20: "Hic primus imperatorum omnium Christianus fuit."

⁴ Eusebius, H. E., 7. 10.

another to the Empress Otacilia Severa.¹ This second piece of evidence is certainly not strong enough to convince us that Philip was a Christian, especially when we consider that he was responsible for the death of his predecessor, Gordian III., and that he publicly conformed to the State worship,² while both he and his son were deified at their death.³ But how are we to explain the existence of the tradition? It is highly probable that the story arose from heathen sources. Philip's friendly policy was doubtless the object of much adverse criticism from pagan writers and thinkers, and this resentment would be intensified by the correspondence which was known to have passed between Origen and the emperor and his wife.⁴ As time went on, and the story passed from mouth to mouth, his negative sympathy would be intensified into a positive profession of Christianity on Philip's part, and hence perhaps on the part of Alexander also, whose standpoint—namely, that of a broad eclecticism — would be identified with that of

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 36.

² Cohen, p. 139, 14, gives us coins, which point with their inscriptions to the dawn of a new *saculum*, and show us the Caesar offering. His wife also did not fail in her duty : cf. Cohen, pp. 146, 34 ; 147, 39.

³ Eutropius, 9. 3.

⁴ Neumann, p. 246 ff.

Philip. It appears to us that MM. Allard and Aubé¹ have adopted a different view without sufficient grounds. We are not compelled to resort to the hypothesis of a profession of Christianity by Philip in order to explain the anti-Christian reaction of 248 and the following years. The change finds abundant explanation in the fact that paganism had been stimulated by the millenary festival of 248, and recognised in the Gothic invasions and the pestilence in Egypt signs of divine disapproval of the policy of Philip, whose conscientious tolerance forbade him to continue proceedings against the Christians,² and thus became an instrument in the propagation of their doctrines. There is but a step between religious enthusiasm and religious intolerance, and the Christians, holding aloof from the public giving of thanks, may almost be said to have invited the punishment, which began only a few months later with the outbreak at Alexandria. A short quotation³ will serve to illustrate the zealous paganism of the time. “Through all countries, provinces, and cities we see indi-

¹ Allard, cp. 6, § 1. Aubé, p. 471.

² Origen, Adv. C., iii. 15. He foresees a speedy conclusion of the present tranquillity.

³ Minucius Felix, 6. 1. 2.

viduals devoted to their national cults and the honour of their local gods; the Eleusinians to Ceres, the Phrygians to the Mother of the gods, the Epidaurians to Æsculapius, the Chaldeans to Bel, the Syrians to Astarte, the Taurians to Diana, the Gauls to Mercury, but the Romans to all gods. Their power and importance have captivated the world."

We have now completed our review of the attitude of the emperors towards the Christian Church prior to the year 249. The importance of the sect does not seem to have been recognised before the close of the second century: it passed as an unsettling superstition, which could be kept in check by repressive measures. After the accession of Severus, although the same statutes were liable to be enforced either generally or locally at the caprice of an individual, the State interfered but little with Christianity: Severus and Maximin made the only official attacks on the Church, and these in no way had for their object the general body of Christian believers, but were aimed in the one case at the bishops, and in the other at the growing practice of proselytism. The progress of the Church was interrupted by a few local outbreaks, from which it was not difficult to escape; but these served

rather to test and confirm the strength of belief and purity of motive necessary for healthy development.

Throughout the period, wellnigh continuous, of sixty years of non-Roman Cæsars, the Church was silently extending its influence throughout all grades of society. That it numbered among its sons any of the emperors, even in secret, we cannot allow: in no case did they extend towards it more than a purely negative sympathy. The legalisation of Christianity was a positive step which the throne was too weak to force on the world, and too much isolated to propose with any reasonable hope of acceptance.

CHAPTER IV.

DECIUS: HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY.

THE DIFFICULTY OF THE PROBLEM BEFORE DECIUS — THE ROMAN RELIGION—RISE OF FOREIGN CULTS — MOVEMENT TOWARDS MONOTHEISM—THE CULTUS OF CÆSAR—REACTION FROM THE MILDNESS OF PHILIP—SUGGESTED CAUSES—A FRESH ERA IN THE GREAT STRUGGLE—THE MOVEMENT NO LONGER POPULAR BUT OFFICIAL — ETHICAL VIEW OF THE CASE—ATTITUDE OF THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT—CONTRAST BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY — A TRADITIONAL RELIGION MUST BE JEALOUS —DECIUS FOLLOWED OLD MAXIMS.

THE religious question as it presented itself to Decius was encumbered with grave difficulties. No preceding emperor—at least if we may judge from recorded history—had realised as vividly as did Decius how vitally essential it was to the true conception of the Roman State-idea that religion and the State should be absolutely identified with one another; in fact, that no man could be a true citizen who was not a steadfast adherent of the State form of worship. Hence Decius could

profit by the experience of no predecessor in formulating a plan of action, in facing a problem hitherto untouched. That he approached it with due gravity and conscientiousness we can scarcely doubt, while his consistency and thoroughness in the attempt demand at least our respect.

The religion on behalf of which Decius was struggling¹ was one based on the ancient Greek and Roman polytheism, with the Cæsar-cult as a dominating element. By means of this eclectic creed he wished to supplant the numerous cults which had collected at Rome, and had so long usurped its sway. Before the time of Hadrian there had been introduced the worship of the Phrygian and Egyptian deities, such as Magna Mater, Isis, and Osiris,² while a large number of freedmen had become proselytes to Judaism.³ The second great period of religious development coincided in date with the dynasty of the Antonines, when the Syrian⁴ and Persian forms of belief found favour; Syrian worships were represented chiefly by that of the sun-god of Emesa,

¹ Cf. Ramsay, C. in R. E., p. 191 ff.

² And Christianity as well, but it had not yet attained such growth as to appear dangerous.

³ Juvenal and Persius have many allusions to the Jewish proselytism of that time.

⁴ Cf. Juvenal, Satire iii. 62.

of whose rites the voluptuous Elagabalus a century later was the most notable adherent; but in this last and almost despairing revival of heathenism every other cult paled before that of Mithras, the Persian sun-god.

Mithras-worship had been permitted under Tiberius, but only attained prominence under the Antonines, and retained its lofty position until about 400 A.D. A writer in the fourth century¹ assigns the highest places in the motley Pantheon to Isis, Cybele, Virgo Cælestis (Astarte, the Carthaginian deity), and Mithras, the deities respectively of water, earth, air, and fire. The only possible solution of the difficulty arising from the existence of so many deities was to regard them as different manifestations or aspects of the same supreme power, and this expedient recommended itself gradually to the heathen mind. The general trend of thought was towards monotheism, and, although the time was as yet not ripe for it, Christianity was waiting to satisfy the cravings of the age. The actual contest between the Church and paganism for the possession of the world did not begin until, at the opening of the third century, the Church could number among

¹ Firmicus Maternus (c. 346), in his work ‘De errore profanarum religionum.’

her sons the men of law and letters, philosophy and rhetoric, who held possession of the world of literature.¹ In the course of this rivalry the two forms of monotheism, the pure and the imperfect, acted and reacted on one another in a marked degree.

Side by side with these manifold forms of worship stood the cultus of the Cæsar. Springing out of the characteristic reverence of Rome for the Manes, the Lares, and the Genius of the family, it found support first in the provinces, and then in Rome itself, under the influence of Greek and oriental tendencies. To this cultus many public priesthoods and private guilds owed their existence.² Here was the nucleus for the new Roman State religion, with the old polytheism of Greece and Rome as its fitting complement; and by adopting it Decius found himself in conflict with Christianity. An outward conformity was all that was required; when this was rendered, a citizen had testified his loyalty to the State, and was free to indulge his private religious fancies as he wished. To a pagan this conformity would present no difficulty; in the case

¹ E.g., Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen.

² This section is based entirely on Marquardt, *Sacralwesen*, iii. p. 75 ff.

of a Christian, compromise was impossible, for Christ demanded an undivided allegiance.

We cannot but observe the unfailing regularity with which, as in politics so in religion, the pendulum of change swings backwards and forwards. The sternness of Decius following on the clemency of Philip the Arabian recalls to our minds the barbarity of Maximin succeeding the tolerant liberality of Alexander Severus; and again, Diocletian's attack on the Church follows a spell of peace that had lasted almost unbroken for forty years.

Perhaps the decline of interest in the State religion¹ had been finally borne in upon the mind of Decius in the preceding reign, when Rome had celebrated the festival of her thousandth year, from which the Christians had ostentatiously held aloof: in such circumstances, he must have felt—for he was a shrewd observer—that there was at work in the world a force too lightly estimated hitherto. And when at last power was placed in his own hands, the repressive spirit of the military religionist rose strong within him, and he decreed that Christianity should be exterminated. Against the Christians as individuals he had no grudge—

¹ Officially it had always been rigorously observed.

they were at any rate peaceable citizens—but, in so far as they were *Christians*, they were a hostile camp. A religion which had done more than any other to foster a neglect of the ancient gods, whose votaries disclaimed all civil and military obligations and repudiated the cultus of the emperor, could be dealt with by no half measures. Gentle persuasion, with the suggestion in the background of punishment for the unyielding, might first be tried; but that the inquiry should be searching, and that compliance with the State religion should be urged, and, if necessary, forced upon, every man, woman, and child who was suspected of professing Christianity, was the emperor's deliberate determination. His aim was similar to that of Julian a century later; but for Decius there is more excuse: he was by birth a heathen, and desirous of reforming a heathen country. Julian, on the other hand, had been brought up as a Christian, and his statesmanship was singularly at fault in his attempt to restore an effete and banished religion.¹

The source of the blow which now fell on the Christians indicated a fresh era in the struggle. For forty years (with the exception of a short

¹ Cf. article "Decius," by U. J. H. Bekker, in Ersch and Gruber's Lexicon.

and severe attack on the bishops by Maximin) the supreme power had regarded the growing Church with indifference: all attacks upon it had emanated from the people, who, led astray by their ignorance of Christianity or fired by fanaticism, either took the law into their own hands or prevailed on a plastic governor to put in force the regulations dealing with illicit religions, which as a general rule were allowed to lie dormant. But when the common people had at length been brought to see that their blind charges against the Christians were unfounded, a more formidable opponent advanced to the attack: in the name of public safety, the emperor, supported by all the power of the law, vetoed the existence of Christianity. As guardian of the State order, he was determined to put down an organisation which threatened the welfare of the empire. No compromise was possible: the old laws,¹ never repealed, but allowed by the imperial tolerance to fall into abeyance, were to be put into force once more, backed by such new enactments as the nature of the case might require.² The Syrian Cæsars had introduced cosmopolitanism

¹ E.g., the rescript of Trajan; the law of Septimius Severus (whose existence Neumann denies).

² Cf. Aubé, p. 10 ff.

in religion, and, in consequence, Christianity had been allowed to flourish, and had seized the opportunity of spreading far and wide through the empire. Now, however, the head of the State saw in the followers of this movement nothing but a hostile force, whose advance was to be combated from headquarters. Hence, in this persecution, and in those of Valerian and Diocletian, which followed the same lines, the number of victims was very large; whereas Origen¹ tells us that in the earlier persecutions "only a few persons, who could easily be counted, died at certain times for the Christian religion." For local outbreaks there was now substituted a universal and methodically organised scheme of annihilation.²

The personal convictions of Decius corresponded closely with those of the genuine Roman of an earlier date. In the ethical system of each, the idea of the State was supreme; consequently, any exercise of private judgment in the individual, which led him to practise an illicit cult to the exclusion of the State religion, demanded immediate suppression. "The ideas of man's universal rights, of universal religious freedom and liberty

¹ Origen, *Adv. Celsum*, iii. 8.

² Cf. Baur, *Pt. v.* § 2.

of conscience, were quite alien to the views of the whole ancient world.”¹

The Roman Government was essentially tolerant; but anything like an association not accredited by the State was regarded with considerable apprehension. Here was a wide organisation, pervading every province of the empire. It was governed by officials—often men of inferior birth—who, in their immediate sphere, wielded a greater power than the emperor himself; while, in addition, the society regarded as paramount, and as far outweighing any imperial obligations, the claims of a king whose dominion was to be the world. The anger which in earlier days had inspired heathen mobs to attack those who had the effrontery to declare the established religion false and their own true, had now developed into terror, and terror drove the Government to those counsels of frantic despair which have marked the reigns of Decius and Diocletian with blood.²

It may seem strange that the Roman Government tolerated Judaism among other foreign religions, and yet opposed Christianity with so much vehemence. But the reason for the dis-

¹ Cf. Neander, i. p. 117.

² Cf. Plummer, *The Church and the Early Fathers*, 161 ff.

tinction lay in the fact that while Judaism was the religion of a conquered people, Christianity could claim no special race as its heritage. Rome was wont to conciliate the goodwill of freshly conquered nations, and as a mere matter of policy to leave them in the undisturbed enjoyment of their traditional modes of worship, thus lightening as far as possible the burden of their servitude. But who were the Christians? They had sprung from the same soil as the Jews; yet the Jews disowned them and stimulated Roman hatred against them.¹ Where was their country? They had none, and as soon as they were suppressed in one place they sprang up in another. In short, they were indestructible; their organisation was hydra-headed; as fast as one official was put down, another rose up in his place. The Jews might claim toleration because they had been conquered, but the Christians could offer no such plea; the Jews had their synagogues and their well-known rites, but the Christians were *ἀθεοί*. "Show us your gods," was a familiar demand, which the Christians were never able to answer. In the mind of a conscientious ruler like Decius, this

¹ As at Smyrna, in the case of Polycarp and Pionius. Cf. also Tertullian, Scorp. 1: "Synagoges Judæorum fontes persecutionum."

aspect of the problem can have served only to deepen the conviction that action was necessary. It was an inevitable consequence of the possession of a traditional religion, and the feeling that loyalty to the State was impossible without adherence to its creed, that an earnest and conservative Government should be at the same time a jealous one: a less stringent union between religion and the State was not possible until Christianity could lead the way, with its insistence on the necessity of deliberate choice or refusal on the part of the individual conscience.

Cicero's fundamental maxim on the subject of religion,¹ that "no man shall worship by himself any new or foreign gods *nisi publice adscitos*," and the advice of Mæcenas to Augustus, "Compel all others to worship the gods of your country; punish innovators in religion,"² were founded on a conception which was in no long time to pass away. Decius was unfortunate in having to put his theories to the test at such a time and with so strong a force against him. We cannot help regretting that the reigns of some of the most grossly immoral of Roman emperors³

¹ Cicero, *De legibus*, I. ii. cp. 8.

² Given by Neander, i. 118 ff.

³ E.g., Commodus and Elagabalus.

should have proved the most favourable to the interests of Christianity, while one of the most high-minded of them has earned for himself a name of infamy in the annals of the Church.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHURCH AND THE EDICT.

THE CHURCH BEFORE 212—GROWTH OF LAXITY FROM 212 TO 249
—THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD—THE EDICT—THE MOTIVES OF
DECIUS, AS GIVEN BY EUSEBIUS—THE EDICT PUT FORWARD AT
AN UNPROPITIOUS TIME—DATE OF ITS APPEARANCE—ITS PRO-
VISIONS—INVITATION TO SACRIFICE—A DAY APPOINTED—THE
BISHOPS DENOUNCED—MEETINGS PROBABLY FORBIDDEN—THE
SANCTIONS OF THE EDICT—DIRECTIONS TO THE MAGISTRATES—
THREATS TO CARELESS OFFICIALS—METHODS OF PUNISHMENT
OF OFFENDERS.

APPENDIX A. THE FORM OF THE EDICT: EDICT ISSUED BY
DECIUS AND VALERIAN—HOW PUBLISHED—SUGGESTED TEXTS.

APPENDIX B. THE LEGAL BASIS OF PUNISHMENT: A DIL-
EMMA—FOUR CLASSES OF CRIME UNDER THE ROMAN LAW—
CONCLUSIONS.

I. IT will be desirable to glance briefly at the general state of the Church in the middle of the third century, before discussing the edict of Decius and the effect it produced.

“We know from inscriptions the names of a considerable number of patricians who had

embraced the new faith; since the end of the second century . . . there had arisen a regular Christian aristocracy.”¹ From the time of Commodus the doctrines of Christianity had begun to find adherents in the highest circles at Rome,² and this advance continued without interruption during the reign of Septimius Severus. Tertullian, writing about 197 A.D.,³ mentions the complaints of the heathen respecting the daily increase in the numbers of the Christian body. “You have taken the State by storm,” they exclaimed; “every rank, every sex, every office is passing into your power.” The same writer says again:⁴ “We are but the growth of yesterday, and yet we have taken possession of everything that belonged to you,—your cities and your armies, the imperial palace, the Senate and the law courts: we have left you nothing but your temples.” About the year 212 he writes again: “Although the emperor knew that men and women in the highest positions were followers of our persuasion, so far was he from attacking us that he withheld the angry menaces directed against us by the crowd.”

¹ Allard, p. 241.

² Eusebius, H. E., 5. 21.

³ Tertullian, *Ad nationes*, i. 1.

⁴ *Ad scapulam*, 4. About 212 A.D.

We are quite prepared to grant that the language of Tertullian is exaggerated; but the startling assertions which he makes here and elsewhere in his apologies must have had some foundation in fact.

The necessary result of the adoption of Christianity by persons in the higher walks of life was a gradual reversal of popular opinion. This, together with the fact that there were already in many families Christians living side by side with heathens (as in the case of Perpetua, whose father was a heathen, while she and her brothers were Christians),¹ enabled the purity of the new faith to be seen and tested. The light of day dispelled gradually the darkness that had gathered round Christian rites; the evidence of sense and of fact undermined the infamous charges² which, even in the early part of the third century, though with ever-diminishing acceptance, were brought against the Church. The blind ignorance of a previous generation was giving way to a better knowledge of the facts.³ Still, although wanton misinterpretation

¹ Cf. *Acta Perpetuae*, §§ 2-9, in Ruinart.

² Eusebius, H. E., 4. 7. Cf. also Athenagoras, Apol. 3, and Origen, Adv. Celsum, vi. 40.

³ Cf. F. Görres in F. X. Kraus, *Real-Encyclopädie*, i. p. 232 ff.

was less common, the Christians were long known as *ἀθεοι*, and any public calamity might be safely put down to their account. “If there is no rain, blame the Christians,” was a proverbial expression, as Augustine tells us, in the province of North Africa.¹ The teachers of the Church drew their support particularly from the upper classes, and Origen tells us that noble men and women received the doctors of the Church² into their houses and entertained them.

From 212 to 249 progress was practically uninterrupted.³ The work of Origen was of untold value to the Church; he was active in disseminating the Scriptures, translations of which were multiplying. Eusebius tells us that he laid to rest the heresy of the Arabians. From the mention of this sect and that of the Helcesaites,⁴ we

¹ Neander, i. p. 118.

² Origen, *Adv. Celsum*, iv. 9.

³ Lactantius, *De mort. persec.*, § 3. After the death of Maximin “a period followed during which Rome was governed by a number of good rulers. During this time the Church was attacked by no enemies, and spread out her arms to the east and the west, so that there was no corner of the world so remote that the Gospel had not reached it, no nation so savage that it had not been civilised by the worship of God.” Gregory Nyssen writes (Migne, p. 944) “that [in Pontus] before the Decian edict temples and images had been thrown down, human life had been cleansed from the pollution of idol-worship, and Christians were everywhere erecting houses of prayer in the name of Christ.”

⁴ Eusebius, *H. E.*, 6. 37. 8.

shall perhaps not be wrong if we say that the great dangers threatening the growing life of the Church were laxity of thought arising out of its exuberant vitality, and laxity of life, due to the absence of opposition sufficient to deter those who had not counted the cost from the profession of Christianity. As yet no general persecution had taken place; such troubles as had arisen had passed speedily from men's minds; not many Christians had suffered for their faith,¹ and the unthinking multitude could not see what was apparent to the experienced eye of Origen, that the tranquillity of the present was but the calm before the storm.² Many unworthy elements had crept into the Church, and who can wonder if they brought weakness in their train? Cyprian³ complains that the practice of mixed marriages had sprung up, and had broken down the apostolic tradition. Long peace had weakened the vigour of the Church's discipline, and softened its primitive austerity. Peace had brought with it a love of ease, and the accessions to the Church from the families of the rich and noble were accompanied by a corresponding advance in wealth and public esteem, which

¹ Origen, *Adv. Celsum*, iii. 8.

² *Ibid.*, 15.

³ Cyprian, *De lapsis*, § 6 (Hartel, p. 240).

proved inimical to the old-time Christian virtues of humility and charity. “At Alexandria, as at Rome and Carthage, eloquent voices were deplored the melancholy condition of the Church. It was especially in the great cities that this declension of the Christian life was observable; there, temptations were many, and apart from the seductions of pagan life, the Church, enriched and dignified, . . . itself spread more than one snare for pride and ambition.”¹ For example Origen relates of the Church of Athens that, instead of attempting to please God by a gentle and consistent behaviour, it was rent by factions, and very unlike what the Church of God should be.² Cyprian rebukes some of the celibate clergy³ and virgins for the questionable intimacy which they were reported to maintain; while elsewhere⁴ he deals with the case of an actor who had himself retired from the stage, but wished to continue the training of pupils, and at the same time to retain his membership in the Church. Elsewhere⁵ he complains that the scope of the Church’s action is narrowed through the weak-

¹ De Pressensé, ii. cp. 4.

² Origen, Adv. Celsum, iii. 30.

³ Cyprian, Ep. 4, § 1 (Hartel, pp. 472, 473).

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 2.

⁵ Cyprian, De Cath. Eccl. unit., § 26 (H., p. 236).

ening of the bonds of sympathy between its members. "In old days people laid up treasure in heaven, and sold their property and laid it before the apostles, for them to divide among the poor. But now we never pay tithes on our patrimony, we disobey our Lord's command to sell our goods, and instead, we buy and get gain. Hence our spiritual vigour is weakened, and the strength of believers is crippled." "So lax had the Church's discipline become after the long peace," writes the same bishop after the persecution had subsided, "that the Lord saw that He must prove His children. Yet in His abundant mercy He sent not a persecution but an examination. Men had forgotten the charity of the days of the apostles, and were bent on increasing their property; the clergy had lost devoutness in religion, and faithfulness in service; they had forgotten pity for the poor and holiness of life. Men and women dishonoured the image of their Creator. Fraud and deception were rampant; believers were joined in marriage with unbelievers. Oaths were taken lightly, and as lightly broken; those in authority were set at nought; rancour and hatred ran riot. Even bishops left their sees and their God-given duties, and took office under the rulers of this world,

hunting greedily for gain. While the brethren in the Church were crying for food, they were laying crafty hands on estates, and increasing their capital by means of compound interest. Did not the Church deserve the most grievous punishment?"¹

Almost the entire known world had already been evangelised. Christianity was known from Wales to Mauretania.² Tertullian in a highly rhetorical passage³ writes that all Asia, Egypt, and Africa confessed Christ, as well as the extremities of Spain, the tribes of Gaul, and the inaccessible regions of Britain, in addition to the Sarmatians, the Dacians, the Germans, the Scythians, and many remoter provinces, nations, and islands. Origen⁴ leads us to modify in some degree this statement by saying that the Dacians, the Sarmatians, and the Scythians were as yet untouched by the Gospel, as well as the regions of Ethiopia situated beyond the Nile, and in Asia the Seres,

¹ Cyprian, *De lapsis*, §§ 5, 6 (H., p. 240, l. 7).

² Origen, *Tract. Matth.*, xxviii. It is probable, however, that in the province of N. Africa Christianity had barely touched the native Phœnician population (Benson, Cyprian, p. xxxv); while in Egypt we are led to think that the native Egyptian population had not yet been reached by the Gospel (*Vita Pachomii*).

³ Tertullian, *Adv. Judæos*, § 7.

⁴ Origen, *Adv. Celsum*, ii. Cf. Allard, pp. 244, 245.

whose merchants had reached Rome, but who had not yet been visited by missionaries.

We are now in a position to understand the character and extent of the Church at the moment when the Edict of Decius was published throughout the Roman world.

II. Eusebius,¹ followed by Rufinus,² accounts for the persecution of Decius by representing him as animated in his attack on the Christians by hatred of Philip, and he explains the persecution of Maximin on like grounds.³ It is most improbable that he gives the true cause in either case; since policy, no doubt, suggested to Maximin what a sense of duty imposed on Decius. It has been pointed out by Zonaras that the latter intended to act honestly by Philip,⁴ and the tradition may be true which says that Lucius Priscus, whom Decius left at the head of the Macedonian legions, was Philip's brother.⁵ Further, in view of the fact that not one of the three contemporary

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 39.

² Rufinus, 6. 29.

³ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 28.

⁴ Zonaras, 12. 19, who in other respects was not favourable to Decius.

⁵ Cf. U. J. H. Bekker, in art. "Decius," in Ersch and Gruber's Encyclopædia.

bishops¹ who touch upon this persecution has assigned any reason for the emperor's attitude, we must form our judgment from the few indirect indications we possess.² A sufficient cause for the persecution will be found in the aims of Decius as set forth in chapter iv.

The edict for the first systematic persecution of the Church appeared at a most inopportune time. "The barbarians were surging on the frontiers: on the north the German tribes, on the south-east the Persians, were threatening to inundate the empire. The Franks were already making inroads over the Pyrenees, . . . the Persians penetrating as far as Antioch in Syria."³ The empire was distracted with anxieties of so diverse a nature, that a concentration of its forces on any one point was impossible. Further, a religious reform requires, for success, to be carried out with steady persistence, but in this case what do we find? The Decian persecution dragged on with continually decreasing energy from December 249 until March or April 251; from that date until 257 the Christians enjoyed for the most part a period of tranquillity, precarious perhaps,

¹ *I.e.*, Cyprian, Cornelius, Dionysius of Alexandria.

² Cf. F. Görres in F. L. Kraus, *Real-Encyclopädie*, i. p. 232.

³ Uhlhorn, Kampf, p. 331.

but of sufficient duration to allow recovery of strength. From 257 to 260 Valerian put forth his best energies against the Church, but from that time onwards a peace unbroken for forty years enabled Christianity to build up a fortress against which paganism hurled in vain the forces of the world. The secret of Rome's early power lay in continuity of policy, and the years of her decline were marked by the lack of it.

The loathsome edict,¹ as it is called in the ‘Acta Sanctorum,’ appeared in the last days of 249 or very early in 250; for by January 20 two martyrdoms had already taken place.² The language in which it was couched was of so severe a nature “as, if it were possible, to cause even the elect to stumble.”³ The exact wording of the edict has not been preserved to us, although several more or less fictitious versions of it are extant in various “Acta Sanctorum.” In 1663 appeared a rendering of the edict, published by Bernard

¹ τὸ βδελυρὸν πρόσταγμα.

² That of Fabian of Rome, on January 20. Cf. ‘Episcoporum urbis Catalogus ex Chron. Lib.’ (Lipsius ed.), p. 266: “Fabianus ann. xiii. m. 1, d. x. . . Passus xii[i.] Kal. Feb.” And that of Polyeuctes, which Duchesne (Bull. Crit., Nov. 1882) has shown to have taken place probably on January 10, 250.

³ Eusebius, H. E., 6. 41.

Medon of Toulouse, who professed to have taken it from some very ancient manuscripts. The present writer has tried in vain to find a copy of this so-called reproduction, but Aubé, who has seen it, pronounces it to be an effort of the imagination, and sees great improbabilities in the evidence tendered on its behalf.¹ It is, then, our duty to examine such testimony, direct or indirect, as we can gather, in order to discover the nature of the edict.

Its provisions were divided into two parts, one of which was addressed to the public and the other to the officials. It seems likely that only the provisions relating directly to the public were generally announced and exhibited, while the instructions to the magistrates were attached to the edict as a private commentary upon the public clauses.

(a) The world was called upon to sacrifice to the gods and to the genius of the emperor. That the invitation was general and not confined to the Christians may be gathered from various indications.

We can scarcely imagine that any official lists of the Christians would be in the hands of the authorities, while, if the bishops possessed any,

¹ Aubé, pp. 16, 17.

it would be unreasonable to expect that they would deliver them up.¹ Again, it was for the welfare of the Roman world that the sacrifices should be offered by every inhabitant of every city, in order to secure a united observance of the State worship. Dionysius of Alexandria tells us that men and women were summoned to the sacrifices by name: this points to official lists of the inhabitants² rather than to a knowledge of names gained by informal delation, a method of obtaining intelligence which would of necessity prove highly inaccurate.³ If we may draw any inferences from later edicts—namely, those of Gallus and Maximin Daza—we shall find this suggestion confirmed;⁴ for in all probability, the edict of Decius, as the first which enjoined systematic and universal sacrifices, would be closely followed in future enactments.

¹ In the ‘Acta Achati’ the prefect says, “Omnium trade mihi nomina, ne ipse succumbas.” The demand was of course unhesitatingly refused.

² Cf. Eusebius, *De Mart. Pal.*, 4. 8: ὁνομαστί χιλιάρχων ἀπὸ γραφῆς ἔκαστον ἀνακαλουμένων.

³ ὁνομαστί τε καλούμενοι, ταῖς ἀνάγνοις καὶ ἀνιεροῖς θυσίαις προσῆσαν.

⁴ For Gallus’s edict cf. Cyprian, Ep. 59, § 6 (H., p. 673). Cf. Eusebius, *De Mart. Pal.*, 3. 1, for Maximin’s: καθολικῷ προστάγματι πάντας πανδημεῖ τοὺς κατὰ πόλιν θύειν τε καὶ σπένδειν τοῖς εἰδῶλοις ἐκελεύετο.

(b) A day was named on which all the subjects of the empire must comply with the requirements of the edict.¹

These popular sacrifices,² with a prescribed limit of one to fifty days, before the expiration of which each tribe was to sacrifice,³ were an institution of old standing, and for that reason appropriate to the purpose of Decius, in his attempt to revive the customs of the past. It is certain that at Carthage the people went in large bodies to sacrifice,⁴ while it is probable that the same thing took place at Rome, where we hear of a woman slipping away before she had reached the altar.⁵ There were doubtless rules prescribing the order which the various tribes and families were to follow in sacrificing, but many feeble souls, immediately on receiving the news, hurried off to the forum to protest their loyalty to paganism. Such persons may have received *libelli*—certificates which attested their

¹ Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 2 (H., p. 238): “Explorandæ fidei dies præfiniebatur.” *De lapsis*, 3 (H., p. 238): “Dies negantibus præstitutus.”

² Cf. Massebieau, *Les Sacrifices ordonnés à Carthage*, p. 68.

³ Livy, 7. 28. 8: “Ordoque iis, quo quisque die supplicarent, statutus.”

⁴ Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 25 (H., p. 255): “Illic apud idolum quo populus confluebat.”

⁵ Ep. 21, § 3 (H., p. 531).

compliance with the edict,¹ and which would excuse them from attending again on the occasion of the tribal sacrifice, when husbands would bring their wives, and parents their children.² Those who had not presented themselves by the fixed date were presumed to be Christians, and were liable to be dealt with accordingly.³ Any one who disobeyed an imperial edict was liable under ordinary conditions to capital punishment; but on this occasion it was not the intention of the authorities to take the lives of the recusant Christians, but merely to enforce compliance: hence, when gentle persuasion failed of success, compulsion was to be employed.⁴

(c) A clause was added which was specially directed against the Christians. The profession of Christianity was denounced, in so far as it forbade conformity with the demands of the State.⁵ The Christians were ordered to sacri-

¹ *De lapsis*, § 8 (H., p. 242).

² Ep. 24 (H., p. 537). *De lapsis*, § 9 (H., p. 243). Diou. Alex., ap. Eusebium, H. E., 6. 41.

³ *De lapsis*, § 3 (H., p. 238).

⁴ The gradual increase of pressure may easily be observed in the better established ‘Acta Sanctorum’—e.g., ‘Acta Pionii,’ ‘Acta Maximi.’

⁵ Cf. perhaps ‘Acta Maximi’ (Ruinart, p. 144): “*Decretum ut omnes Christiani relicta superflua superstitione cognoscant verum principem cui omnia subiacent, et eius deos adorent.*”

fice,¹ their officers were proscribed,² and it is probable that their meetings were forbidden.

Dr Görres denies³ that Decius anticipated the policy of Valerian in issuing special enactments against the bishops. But Cyprian tells us that Decius was “tyrannus infestus sacerdotibus Dei,”⁴ and that the see of Rome was vacant for sixteen months, Fabianus having been martyred immediately after the publication of the edict. Moreover, the passage cited by the German critic,⁵ instead of proving that Decius left the bishops unmolested, is rather an evidence that the fury of the storm had somewhat abated when Cornelius was made bishop. In the Acts of Calocerus and Parthenius⁶ we read that Decius was led on “by a mad hope that if he removed all the heads of the Church, the entire fabric would dissolve.” Dionysius writes⁷ that, even before the persecution began, an officer was sent

¹ Cf. ‘Acta Carpi et Papyli’ (Aubé): *τὰ προστάγματα περὶ τοῦ δεῖν ὑμᾶς σέβειν τοὺς θεοὺς τοὺς τὰ πάντα διουκύντας.*

² Cyprian, Ep. 55, § 24 (H., p. 642): “Sunt episcopi . . . in persecuzione proscripti.”

³ Zeitschrift fur Wiss. Theol., p. 73, Der Bekeuner Achatius.

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 55, § 9 (H., p. 630). Cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 65.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Acta Caloceri et Parthenii, Acta Sanctorum, May 4.

⁷ Dion. Alex., Ap. Eusebium, 6. 40. 2.

for his arrest, while Cyprian also found himself compelled to withdraw into the country. The suggestion that meetings were forbidden is drawn from the fact of their prohibition under Valerian. "You and all others," says *Æmilianus* the prefect, "will be absolutely prohibited from holding meetings or gathering in your so-called 'sleeping-places' for the dead. If any one . . . is found in a place of meeting, he shall be punished."¹ Dionysius² had written above: "*Æmilianus* had not said to me, 'Hold no meetings; ' the question was not one of holding meetings so much as of actually being Christians." The object of the edict was not punitive³ so much as compulsive; its scope was universal and at the same time particular.⁴ If we attach any importance to the accounts preserved in the '*Acta Sanctorum*', we cannot but be struck by the gentleness of the prefects and judges, who continually appealed to the defendant to obey for

¹ Dion. Alex., Ap. Eusebium, 7. 10. 11.

² Eusebius, 7. 11. 4.

³ Cf. '*Acta Achatii.*' Martianus, the "consularis," says, "Ego non sum iussus iudicare sed cogere."

⁴ Le Blant, p. 312, says, "Personne ne pouvait échapper : la population entière était mise à l'épreuve : c'était une sorte de recensement universel, où l'administration comptait les âmes."

his own sake, although their sympathies were frequently alienated by an attitude of defiant provocation.

(d) The requirements of the edict were enforced by heavy penalties:¹ these, however, were not defined, but with the intention of promoting compliance by their awful vagueness, the emperor refrained from entering into details of criminal procedure, or of any graduated scale of tortures.² The widely different interpretations put upon the edict by various magistrates must have produced a result unsatisfactory in practice: an edict not administered on fixed principles gave every opportunity to a magistrate to be lax or severe at will; hence in Valerian's great edict a regular scale of penalties was set forth, and the Christians were dealt with on, at any rate, a "known and intelligible system."³

Such, then, was the purport of the edict as published: it called upon the world to sacrifice before a particular day; the Christian body, and especially its officials, was denounced, and all

¹ Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 13 (H., p. 246).

² Gregory Nyssen, *Vita Thaumaturgi* (Migne), iii. p. 944: εἰ μὴ προσαγάγοιεν πάλιν αὐτοὺς φόβῳ τε καὶ τῇ τῶν αἰκισμῶν ἀναγκῇ τῇ πατρῷα τῶν δαιμόνων λατρείᾳ.

³ Mason, *Persecution of Diocletian*, p. 115.

such as had not sacrificed by the prescribed date would be liable to prosecution ; lastly, grave penalties were threatened in case of disobedience to the imperial order.

To the public provisions of the edict were attached a private commentary, in the shape of suggestions to the magistrates as to the enforcement of its regulations.

(1) All preliminary steps were to be taken by the local magistrates, assisted by a commission composed of notable citizens of the place,¹ who were to preside at the appointed sacrifices, give certificates to all that had conformed, and mark on their list the names of such families and individuals as had attended in their order. No steps were to be taken to enforce the law before the prescribed day had passed ; but after that, the search for recusants, and the examination of those who were suspected of professing Christianity, were to begin. The local magistrates had not the right of inflicting capital punishment, but might imprison and torture, in order to induce compliance, until the arrival of the proconsul, who would appear in the course of March or April, and would finally pronounce

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 43 (H., p. 592) ; Eusebius, H. E., 6. 41. 23 : *τόν τε ἡγέμονα καὶ τοὺς συνέδρους.*

judgment on the prisoners after further examination.

The Acts of Pionius, to which reference will be made in a later chapter, form the best illustration of the course of procedure, and record that at Smyrna the apostate bishop, Euctemon, joined in the official examination of his more constant brethren. Cyprian,¹ in writing to the elders of Capsa, mentions that Ninus and others had been arrested in the course of the persecution, and had in their confession withstood the fury of the magistrates and the turbulence of the angry mob, although, when the proconsul appeared, they succumbed to the renewed tortures.

(2) Gregory of Nyssa, in a passage which seems highly coloured and partial, tells us² that when the emperor sent his edict to the governors, he threatened them with an awful vengeance if they did not employ every kind of horror to force the worshippers of Christ to apostatise, and to bring them back by means of fear and compulsion to the ancient faith. In this case popular fury united with a brutal governor to attack the Church. The effect of the strictures of the edict

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 56, § 1 (H., p. 648).

² In his 'Vita Thaumaturgi' (Migne), iii. p. 944.

was heightened by the ingenuity of the governor, who devised new species of torture, and exposed to public view frightful instruments which were to be employed in the infliction of punishments hitherto unknown.

To what extent the statements of Gregory can be accepted, it is hard to decide, since we have no other documents touching on the inducements offered to governors to carry out the edict in the spirit in which it was put forth.

(3) Methods of dealing with obstinate recusants were suggested by the emperor. Lucianus¹ writes that “by the emperor’s commands” he and his friends had been condemned to starvation: from this we may conclude that, although the infliction of the death-penalty was not actually ordered, yet punishments which would issue in death were permitted; further, the proconsul always possessed the right of inflicting the death-penalty on any one who might obstinately refuse compliance with an imperial decree.² Banishment and torture were to be employed;³ but what was to be the order of the various penal-

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 22 (H., p. 534, l. 11).

² Thus in ‘Acta Pionii,’ § 20, we read, Πιόνιον ἔαυτὸν δμολογήσαντα εἴναι Χριστιανὸν ζῶντα καῆναι προσετέξαμεν.

³ Cyprian, De lapsis, 2 (H., p. 238): “Non præscripta exilia, non destinata tormenta.”

ties, or whether their infliction was left to the absolute discretion of the individual governor, it is impossible to say. Banishment¹ or voluntary exile² would equally be followed by the confiscation of all personal property.

¹ Ep. 19 (H., p. 526).

² De lapsis, 10 (H., p. 243). Ep. 24 (H., p. 537): "Extorres facti reliquerunt possessiones quas nunc fiscus tenet."

APPENDIX A.

THE FORM OF THE EDICT.

IT is more than possible that the persecuting edict was issued in the joint names of Decius as emperor and Valerian as censor. It is difficult to account otherwise for the tradition¹ that Xystus the bishop and Laurentius the deacon suffered under Decius and Valerian. The same collocation of names appears in the ‘Acta Polyeucti.’ Baronius² enters into an elaborate elucidation of the difficulty, and distinguishes carefully the persecution of Decius as the seventh and that of Valerian as the eighth. He quotes from Trebellius Pollio’s ‘Life of Valerian’ to show that the laws and edicts of Decius were issued in the names of both imperator and censor, and that the edict of Decius, issued in the names of Decius and Valerian, was in force until repealed by the edict of Gallienus in 260, having been merely supplemented in 257 by the more strictly codified regulations of Valerian.

It was possibly some such consideration as this which led Eusebius³ to write of the “interval ex-

¹ Cf. Jerome, *De vir. illustr.*, § 83, and ‘*De Vita Pauli*.’

² In his ‘*Martyrologium Romanum*,’ August 10.

³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, 8. 4. 2.

tending from the reigns of Decius and Valerian (to that of Diocletian).¹ The Metaphrast gives an edict in the life of a martyr assigned to November 24th beginning, “Imperatores, triumphatores, victores, Augusti, pii, Decius et Valerianus.”¹

The official form of the edict was put forth in Latin,² the proconsuls issuing their official pronouncements in that language even among entirely Greek-speaking communities.³ It was forwarded to all governors of provinces and local authorities, and was made known to the public in various ways. In one case we hear that it was fastened up on the city gates.⁴ Maximin’s edict was proclaimed aloud by heralds:⁵ again, the people might be assembled in the circus to

¹ Cf. ‘Acta Terentii’ (Venice, Greek, CCCLIX.): τὸ κελευσθὲν παρὰ τῶν ἀηττητῶν βασιλέων. ‘Acta Polyeucti’ (January 10): κατὰ τὸν Δεκίου καὶ Οὐαλεριανοῦ χρόνου τῶν βασιλέων. ‘Acta Carpī et Papyli’ (Aubé): ἔγνωσταί σοι πάντως τὰ προστάγματα τῶν Αὐγούστων.

² If we may judge from the edict of Galerius, Eus., H. E., 8. 17. 11: ταῦτα κατὰ τὴν τῶν Ρωμαίων φωνὴν (ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλώτταν κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν μεταβληθέντα) τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τρόπον. There was plainly no official translation into Greek in this case.

³ Cf. ‘Acta Pionii’: the proconsul at Smyrna gave his judgment: καὶ ἀπὸ πινακίδος ἀνεγνώσθη Ρωμαῖστι.

⁴ Cf. ‘Acta Eulampiæ’: ὡς πρὸς τὰς βασιλικὰς ἡτένισε διατάξεις, αἱ τῶν πυλῶν ὑπερθεν ἀνάγραπτοι πᾶσιν ἐτύγχανον. Eus., De Mart. Pal., 1. 1.: ἥπλωτο δ’ ἀθρόως πανταχοῦ γράμματα.

⁵ Eus., De Mart. Pal., 4. 8: κηρύκων τε καθ’ ὅλης τῆς Καισαρέων πόλεως ἄνδρας ἄμα γυναιξὶ καὶ τέκνοις ἐπὶ τὸν τῶν εἰδώλων οἴκους ἐξ ἡγεμονικοῦ κελεύσματος ἀναβοωμένων. Id., 9. 2: προγράμμασι καὶ ἐπιστολαῖς καὶ δημοσίοις διατάγμασι.

hear the decree read.¹ As we have said above, we do not possess a genuine text of the edict, but a form given by the Metaphrast² presents a very fair resemblance to what was in all probability the original form :—

“ Imperatores, triumphatores, victores, Augusti, pii, Decius et Valerianus, simul cum senatu hæc communis consilio. Cum deorum beneficia et munera didicerimus, et simul etiam fruamur Victoria, quæ nobis ab ipsis data est adversus inimicos, quin etiam æris temperatione et omne genus fructuum abundantia. Cum eos ergo didicerimus esse benefactores et ea suppeditare quæ sunt in commune utilia; ea de causa uno decreto decernimus ut [stato die] omnis condicio liberorum et servorum, militum et privatorum, diis expiantia offerant sacrificia, procidentes et supplicantes. Si quis autem voluerit divinum nostrum jussum violare, qui communi sententia est a nobis expositus, eum jubemus conici in vincula, deinde variis tormentis subici. Præcipue vero si fuerint inventi aliqui ex religione Christianorum [decernimus, ut relicta superflua superstitione cognoscant verum principem cui omnia subiacent, et eius deos adorent.]³ . . . Valete felicissimi.”

In discussing the recently discovered *libellus*,⁴ Dr

¹ Cf. Le Blant, p. 140. He understands that the forum was the commonest place for the exhibition of the edict. Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 58. 9: “Ne audiant edicta feralia.”

² Metaphrastes, November 24.

³ Introduced from ‘Acta Maximi,’ Ruinart, p. 144.

⁴ In ‘Sitzungsbericht der K. P. Ak. der Wiss.,’ Berlin, xxxvii.

Harnack suggests a restoration of part of the lost edict, basing it on that of Maximin Daza,¹ as compared with the terms of the *libellus*. It runs as follows: ὡς (ὄνομαστὶ) πάντας ἄνδρας ἄμα γυναιξὶ καὶ οἰκέταις καὶ αὐτοῖς ὑπομαζόντοις παισὶ θύειν καὶ σπένδειν αὐτῶν τε ἀκριβῶς τῶν θυσιῶν ἀπογένεσθαι.² ὥστε πάντας τοὺς Χριστιανὸν ἐπιθύειν τοὺς θεοῖς καὶ ἀπολύεσθαι, τοὺς δὲ ἀντιλέγοντας τοὺς προστάγμασι μετ' αἰκισμῶν καὶ βασάνων ποικίλων ξιφεὶ καὶ πυρὶ ἀναιρεῖσθαι.

Lastly, two other extracts deserve notice, unearthed by M. Aubé in the Paris library:—

(a) From Decius to Turcius Rufius Apollonius Valerianus,³ “præfectus prætorio”: “Admonemus urgentes ut, si quos Christianos inveneris in urbe, protinus ad tormenta trahi non differas, qui nolunt Diis nostris humiliari et sacrificia eis offerre, ut possimus eos placatos habere et victores ubique consistere et possit Romana libertas augeri.”

(b) “Cum Decius Romani regni apicem Deo invisus teneret, jussit omnes a propria secta abstrahi et invocantes nomen Domini Jesu Christi ad imunda sacrificia provocari. Si qui autem contradixissent judici offerri et pœnis validis necari.”⁴

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 9. 2. 2.

² This corresponds with the scene described in Cyprian, De lapsis, 25, where a nurse brings a child to the idol, and it is made to taste of the sacrificed food. Also with the terms of the *libellus*, as provisionally restored: καὶ τῶν ιερέων (ἐγεν)σάμην.

³ In the ‘Acta Abdonis et Sennis’ (MS. de la Bibliothèque nat. de Paris, fonds latin, No. 5323, fol. 159 r), Aubé, p. 19.

⁴ MS. de la Biblioth. nat. de Paris, fonds latin, No. 17,626, fol. 22 v, Aubé, p. 20.

This latter text is only of slight value, as the form is not official.

Fresh documents must be brought to light before we can hope to arrive at a satisfactory restoration. At present it is only possible to reach a mere approximation to the true form of the edict.

APPENDIX B.

THE LEGAL BASIS OF PUNISHMENT.

A brief glance at the crimes of which the Christians were technically guilty, and the penalties due for them, may be interesting.

Mommsen¹ points out that the repressive measures put in force against the Christians by earlier emperors were not criminal prosecutions, but "police precautions." But when Decius became emperor the conception of Christianity as a treasonable system had considerable weight.

The conception at the base of legal punishment is that crime once committed remains until full requital has been made. Pliny, in his early trials, punished even those who had renounced Christianity; the *nomen* alone was enough to bring them within the reach of the law. But after the famous rescript of

¹ Der Religionsfrevel nach Römischem Recht, in 'Historische Zeitschrift,' 1890, p. 397.

Trajan to Pliny the accepted principle was that any man who renounced Christianity was *ipso facto* freed from guilt. It was this anomaly—viz., that the profession of Christianity was a crime, but that the renunciation of it meant immediate release—that made Origen say,¹ “Christians are the only [criminal] class of men who are allowed to live at home in peace if they renounce Christianity and satisfy the requirements of the State religion.” Here, then, was a dilemma: if it was a crime to profess Christianity, how could its renunciation, unaccompanied by punishment, acquit of all guilt? If, on the other hand, Christianity was no crime, why then was it punishable?

We can only answer this question by recognising that there were four kinds of technical charges against the Christians:²—

- (a) As introducers of a *religio illicita*.
- (b) As guilty of *læsa maiestas*.
- (c) As guilty of *sacrilegium*.
- (d) As guilty of *magic*.

(a) Persons introducing a *religio illicita* were liable to—

- (1) Death, or
- (2) (If *honestiores*) banishment, or (if *humiliores*) condemnation to the mines.

Banishment,³ the punishment inflicted by Maximin on the bishops Pontianus and Hippolytus, who were

¹ Origen, *Adv. Celsum*, ii. 13.

² From Le Blant, *Les Persécuteurs et les Martyrs*.

³ From Allard, p. 331.

sent to Sardinia, was “a prohibition to reside in the province.” It did not involve loss of civil rights, nor necessarily imply confiscation of property; and where in exceptional cases this additional penalty was prescribed, it did not touch the entire property of the accused. But, for the Christians, the scope of this punishment was considerably extended by the Decian edict; it entailed the entire loss of patrimony,¹ which went to the *fiscus*, while it might now be inflicted by a municipal magistrate.

(b) and (c) “Proximum *sacrilegio* crimen est quod *maiestatis* dicitur,” writes Ulpian;² and the same writer explains *maiestas*³ thus: “*Maiestatis* autem crimen illud est, quod adversus populum Romanum vel adversus securitatem eius committitur. Quo teneatur is cuius opera dolo malo consilium initum erit . . . quo cœtus conventusve fiat hominesve ad seditionem convocentur.” Any man accused of violating the laws of *maiestas* (whether *honestior* or *humiliores*) was entirely outside the protection of the law, and became liable to torture.⁴ All pagans guilty of *laesa maiestas* lost social rank, but the Christians by virtue of their very name became outlaws. Those guilty of *sacrilegium* were (if *honestiores*) liable to be beheaded, or (if *humiliores*) to be crucified or exposed to wild

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 19 (H., p. 526, l. 10).

² Ulpian, De proconsule, bk. vii.

³ Ulpian, Dig., xlvi. 4. 1.

⁴ Paullus, Sentent., v. 29. 2: “Cum de eo quæritur, nulla dignitas a tormentis excipitur.”

beasts in the circus;¹ those guilty of *maiestas* were liable (if *honestiores*) to be beheaded, or (if *humiliores*) to be burnt alive or exposed in the circus, torture having been already administered.² Tertullian³ complains of the additional cruelty displayed towards the Christians, and writes to Scapula, the governor: “ You are merely commanded to condemn the guilty on their confession, and put to renewed torture those who refuse compliance; but we are burned—a punishment you are not in the habit of inflicting on *sacrilegi*, or genuine public enemies, or all the people convicted of *maiestas*. ” To the class of those convicted of *sacrilegium* belongs Cyprian of Carthage,⁴ while Pionius of Smyrna was *irreligiosus in principes*, and was burnt alive as an *ἀσεβής*, his crime being technically *maiestas*.⁵

(d) Those guilty of practising magic were liable to crucifixion or exposure to wild beasts in the circus.⁶

Tertullian,⁷ writing at the beginning of the third

¹ Cf. Ulpian, Dig., l. i. Ad leg. Jul. majest. (xlviii. 4), and Paullus, Sentent., v. 29. 1.

² Cf. Paullus, Sentent., v. 29. 1: “ *Humiliores bestiis obiciuntur vel vivi exuruntur, honestiores capite puniuntur.* ”

³ Tertullian, Ad Scapulam, 4.

⁴ Cypriani Acta Proconsularia, § 4.

⁵ Pionius had refused the invitation of Polemo, *καν ἐπίθυσον τῷ αὐτοκράτορι*, and was burnt.

⁶ Cf. Paullus, Sentent., v. 23. 17: “ *Magice artis consciens summo supplicio adfici placuit* ” (*i.e.*, bestiis obici, aut cruci suffigi). In the ‘Acta Achatii’ the judge says that he holds Christianity to be equal to magic.

⁷ Tertullian, Apologet., 25. 35. 37.

century, points out that every epithet of execration was heaped upon the Christians. They were called enemies, public enemies, enemies of the gods, of the emperors, and of the law, foes of the entire human race. The sternest punishments of the law were not too severe for such wretches.¹

While bearing in mind the fact that most of the penalties inflicted upon the Christians were those appropriate to the four special classes of crime above mentioned—viz., the introduction of a *religio illicita*, *lesa maiestas*, *sacrilegium*, and the *use of magic*—we must not forget that the persecution introduced a process of law which differed widely from all precedents, and was no longer directed against individuals separately accused. We need go no further than to admit the possibility that the particular circumstances of each case guided the magistrates in determining the specific category of crime under which it fell, and the punishment most appropriate to it.

¹ This appendix is drawn mostly from Le Blant's chapter, "Les bases juridiques des poursuites," in his work, 'Les Persécuteurs et les Martyrs.'

CHAPTER VI.

THE PERSECUTION IN EUROPE.

THE EDICT AT ROME—DIRECTED AND EXECUTED AGAINST THE BISHOPS—THE CHURCH IN ROME—THE DEATH OF FABIANUS—HIS GRAVE—ELECTION OF HIS SUCCESSOR, CORNELIUS, DELAYED—DISCUSSION AS TO ITS DATE—INTREPID BEARING OF THE NEW BISHOP—RECEPTION OF THE EDICT AT ROME—CONFESSORS—DEATH OF MOYESES—BRAVERY OF CELEPINUS—OTHER CONFESSORS—PARTHENIUS AND CALOCERUS—ABDON AND SENNEN—METHODS OF EVADING THE EDICT—PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL—ROME A REFUGE FOR SUFFERERS—THE STORM PASSES OVER—REASON ASSIGNED—TWO SPANISH BISHOPS RENOUNCE CHRISTIANITY—‘ACTA’ OF LITTLE AUTHORITY—MARTYRDOM OF SATURNINUS OF TOULOUSE.

THE documentary evidence extant is of so indirect a nature that it is impossible to give a very complete account of the course which the persecution took in the capital.

In the previous chapter it has been shown that the edict was published before January 20, 250, and in chapter i. that the emperor left Rome in the following March or April. We may conclude

that during the first three months of 250 the persecution was carried out under the immediate superintendence of the emperor, while from April 250 till his death in the summer of 251 (during which period we have reason to believe that he did not again visit Rome) the edict was put in force with constantly diminishing energy, until what was practically an amnesty succeeded. In March 251 a new bishop, who held his position, undisturbed by interference from without, during the last few months of the reign of Decius, was appointed to the see of Rome. It is probable that the ordinary members of the Church did not feel the full force of the persecution, which was purposely directed against their officials. It was the emperor's deliberate intention to reduce the Church at large to impotence by striking at its head:¹ hence none but the bishop, the presbyters, and some leading members of the Church were arrested, although further steps—which, however, were never actually taken—may have been in contemplation. This may account for the fact that we read of far less bloodshed at Rome than either in North Africa or in Egypt. It is possible

¹ Cf. ‘Acta Caloceri et Parthenii’: “Sperans insanus quod si istos qui erant capita ecclesiarum tolleret, corpus omne Ecclesiae interiret.”

that the emperor's presence at Rome gave the persecution a less savage character than it exhibited in the provinces which were more remote from his supervision, and in which the opportunities of an appeal to his authority were few and far between.

Dodwell¹ calls attention to the very limited number of actual martyrdoms which took place in this persecution. We have seen that the emperor aimed at conversion rather than death, and it seems certain that although the present trial was more harassing than any of those that preceded it, the number of confessors was greater than that of the martyrs who died for their faith.

The Church at Rome was by this time very large, if we may judge from a statement of the numbers of its officials, which we find in a letter² of Cornelius of Rome to Fabius of Antioch: "In the Church there are forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two attendants, fifty exorcists and readers, together with doorkeepers, and more than fifteen hundred widows and afflicted." We read that Fabianus (probably in the reign of Philip) assigned to his seven deacons the care of the fourteen districts into

¹ Dissert. Cyprianicæ, No. xi., De paucitate martyrum, § 53.

² Eusebius, H. E., 6. 43. 11.

which Augustus had divided the city, and gave orders for the erection of a number of *fabricæ*¹ (perhaps oratories) in the cemeteries. The same bishop ordained twenty-two presbyters and eight deacons² during his tenure of office.

The life of the Church at Rome was very closely connected with the cemeteries, where, during the long interval of peace which began with Caracalla, a number of oratories had been built by Fabianus. We have no evidence to show that Decius forbade, as did Valerian later, all visits to the sepulchres.

The first name which confronts us in the list of sufferers at Rome is that of Fabianus, the bishop. As being the most conspicuous person in the Church, he was the first to be arrested. Eusebius tells us that he had been miraculously chosen to succeed Anteros,³ and “died at Rome when Decius began to persecute.”⁴ Having held the see for a little over fourteen years, he was martyred on January 20, 250, and was buried in the cemetery of St Callistus.⁵ No details remain

¹ Cf. ‘Episcoporum Urbis Catalogus’ ex Chron. Lib. (ed. Lipsius), p. 266. Cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 67.

² Cf. ‘Depositio Martyrum’ in Cat. Lib. (ed. Duchesne), p. 11. ³ Cf. Eusebius, 6. 29.

⁴ Cf. Eusebius, 6. 39, and Epiphanius, De pondd. et menss., 18.

⁵ Cf. Duchesne, Lib. Pontif., pp. 11 and 65.

respecting his trial or death. In a small chamber in the catacombs identified by de Rossi¹ as his *cella memoriae* have been discovered several memorial stones which had been hidden beneath the accumulated rubbish. We have every reason to believe that these are the original monuments of St Anteros, St Fabianus, St Lucius, and St Eutychianus. The inscription on one of them reads :—

ΦΑΒΙΑΝΟC · Ε(Π)Ι + ΜΡ

The monogram, which is doubtless intended to show that he had suffered martyrdom, is not the work of the same hand as the earlier part of the inscription, and would seem to have been added after the stone had been fixed in its place. The cause of this difference in the date of the various words is due to the fact, pointed out by de Rossi, that in consequence of the prolonged vacancy in the Holy See after his death, there was no one to authenticate the claims of St Fabian to the veneration of the faithful ; for at least eighteen months he was not a *martyr vindicatus*. His death² was

¹ Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotteranea*, pt. i., 1879.

² Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 30 (H., p. 553. 5.) : "Post excessum . . . Fabiani."

followed by an interval of considerable length,¹ during which, owing to the severity of the persecution, no successor could with any safety be appointed.² The general management of the affairs of the Church devolved on a presbyteral council, who wisely decided to take no official steps with respect to such disputed points as the treatment of the *lapsi*, but to wait for the restoration of peace, when a new bishop might be elected.

The date of the election of Cornelius is uncertain, but the suggestion of Lipsius that it occurred in March 251 seems more probable than that of Tillemont, who would assign it to June.³ We are guided in accepting the date suggested by Lipsius by the following facts. Lucius, who succeeded Cornelius in 253, was sent into banishment almost immediately on his accession. This could only have happened under Gallus, since the state of affairs was too unsettled to allow Æmilianus to take any part in religious matters, and Valerian did not attack the Church till 257. Now Gallus, as will be shown hereafter, died not later

¹ Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 21 (H., p. 531, 21). Lipsius, Verzeichniss, reckons that the vacancy lasted about fourteen months, till early in March 251.

² Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 55 (H., p. 630).

³ Tillemont, Empereurs, iii. p. 282. Cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 127.

than June 253. Hence, if we may suppose Lucius to have been elected in May 253, and banished in the same month, we shall find that the interval between the date of the election of Cornelius in March 251 and that of Lucius in May 253 is two years and two months, the exact length of the episcopate of Cornelius, as given by Duchesne¹ in his restoration of the ‘Liber Pontificalis.’ It is suggested by Tillemont that the Christians seized the opportunity of electing a bishop when Julius Valens was master of Rome,² but it seems probable, as we saw in chapter i., that his usurpation took place immediately after Decius had left Rome in 250. The words of Cyprian³ would be far more appropriate to the time when Decius found himself confronted by the opposition of Lucius Priscus in Macedonia, early in 251, and heard that at Rome a new bishop had been appointed to succeed Fabianus. The details of the opposition within the Church to the election of Cornelius need not detain us

¹ Duchesne, Lib. Pontif., p. 65: “xxii. Cornelius natione Romanus, sedit ann. ii. m. ii. d. iii.”

² Cf. also Pearson, Annales Cyprianicæ, 29.

³ Cyprian, Ep. 55 (H., p. 630). The stress laid on *Romæ* by its position in the sentence almost implies that the “æmulus princeps” was not in the city, where some suppose that Valens’ rising took place.

here, but will be dealt with in the chapter relating to the schism of Novatian: suffice it here to record that after a considerable interval¹ he was duly appointed² to the see of Rome, which he held until May 253. Cyprian adverts to the remarkable intrepidity with which, when elected, he faced the violent threats and denunciations launched against the clergy by the emperor. Inasmuch, however, as the confessors had by this time been set at liberty, and it was thought safe to proceed to the election of a new bishop, we must conclude that Cyprian was referring merely to the edict of the absent emperor,³ which was practically in abeyance by March 251.

We gather, therefore, that the Church at Rome lost its bishop in January 250, from which date, until March 251, it was governed by a council of presbyters. The election of Cornelius was followed by the return of the confessors⁴ who had joined the schism of Novatian, and by the

¹ Ep. 30 (H., p. 553).

² Ep. 69 (H., p. 752). Cf. 'Chron. Pasch.', Ol. 258. Eusebius, H. E., 6. 39.

³ Cyprian, Ep. 55 (H., p. 630), "Sedisse intrepidum . . . eo tempore cum tyrannus infestus sacerdotibus Dei fanda atque infanda comminaretur."

⁴ Lib. Pontif. (Duchesne), p. 65: "Sub episcopatu eius . . . confessores qui se separaverant a Cornelio, cum Maximo presbytero qui cum Moyse fuit, ad ecclesiam sunt reversi fideles."

synod held at Rome and composed of Italian and African bishops, to decide the question of the restoration of the *lapsi*.¹ As this chapter deals only with the course of events in the Decian persecution, we may for the present leave Cornelius, and consider the persecution as it affected other members of the Roman Church.

In a letter from the presbyters at Rome to those at Carthage we find a short account² of the way in which the edict had been received. "We besought the brethren," they wrote, "to stand fast in the faith, and to be ready to meet the Lord. We actually called back some who were even mounting to the Capitol to obey the summons to sacrifice. The Church holds firmly to the faith, although some fell through fear, whether it was that they were in high positions, or that they were moved by the fear of man: we have not deserted these, but we have separated them from communion, and exhort them to penitence."

But although there were many *lapsi*, we possess the names of several men whose confession main-

¹ Jerome, *De vir. ill.*, § 66: "Cornelius . . . scripsit epistolam ad Fabium Antiochæ ecclesiæ episcopum de Synodo Romana Italica Africana."

² Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 8 (H., p. 487), l. 5 ff.

tained the honour of the faith to which others in the imperial city bore so poor a testimony. Of these confessors, one only, so far as we know,¹ obtained the final glory of a martyr's death, and that because his enfeebled constitution could no longer endure the tortures to which his companions had equally been subjected.

Two presbyters, Moyses and Maximus, and two deacons, Nicostratus and Rufinus,² were imprisoned shortly after the death of Fabianus on January 20.³ We append a short extract from a letter to Cyprian written in the name of these four confessors:⁴ “To what prouder fortune could we look forward than to confess the Lord God before the very executioners without a fear, or than amid the endless torments of the powers of the world, though the body be mangled and tortured, to confess with unfaltering lips that Christ is the Son of God, to refuse to deny our faith by obeying the profane laws of man, to proclaim the truth to the world, and by death

¹ In this statement the names of those given in the ‘Acta Sanctorum’ are purposely withheld, as by no means sufficiently authenticated.

² These names are associated in Cyprian, Ep. 32 (H., p. 565).

³ Episc. urb. Catal. (Lipsius), p. 266. Rufinus is not mentioned in this passage.

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 31, § 3 (H., p. 559), and Ep. 27 (H., p. 544).

to subdue the very death that others fear?" From words used elsewhere by Cyprian,¹ we should judge that although these men were the first to suffer imprisonment, it was the lot of others to win the crown of martyrdom² before them: they set a good example, and gave promise of the coming triumph. He gives it as his opinion that those who were first in the battle and led the way to victory, should be held in equal honour with those to whom it was granted to attain to martyrdom. A letter³ from Cyprian to these confessors is preserved, tracing the course of their year in prison through the seasons, from winter to spring, from spring to summer, from summer to autumn: "The wine is now being trodden in the wine-press; ye are rich clusters from the vineyard of the Lord: your grapes are ripe, ye are trodden down by the attack of the powers of this world, the tortures of the prison-house have been for you the wine-press; but instead of wine ye shed your blood; strong in enduring pain, ye drink with joy the cup of martyrdom. Thus does the year roll on for the servants of God." Their constancy triumphed over hunger and thirst, over the filth and other horrors of the prison-house.

¹ Ep. 28 (H., p. 545). ² See note at end of chapter x.

³ Ep. 37 (H., p. 577).

At last, early in January 251, Moyses, worn out with his prolonged trial and the severity of the winter, succumbed to his sufferings, after an imprisonment of eleven months and eleven days.¹

At the same time as these four confessors, there were confined in prison Urbanus, who twice witnessed a noble confession, Sidonius and Macarius, and Celerinus. In a letter to Fabius of Antioch,² Cornelius mentions all of these except Macarius, while he singles out Celerinus for particular commendation, writing of him as a man who had endured every torture with the utmost bravery, and had overcome the weakness of his flesh by the strength of his faith, beating down his antagonist by sheer resolution. Celerinus was a *lector*,³ and came of a stock which had produced several confessors.⁴ Two letters have been preserved — one from Celerinus to Lucianus, and its answer, of which Cyprian writes:⁵ “I have sent you also copies of the

¹ Episc. urb. Catal (Lipsius), p. 266.

² Eusebius, H. E., 6.43, gives this letter.

³ Lib. Pontif. (Duchesne), p. 66: “Et de Celerino lectore.”

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 39 (H., p. 583). His grandmother was a martyr; so were also two other relations. Archbishop Benson gives a long and interesting account of Celerinus, Cyprian, pp. 69-72.

⁵ Cyprian, Ep. 27, § 3 (H., p. 543).

etter which that strong and noble confessor Celerinus wrote to Lucianus, and also Lucianus' answer, in order that you may know how careful and self-restrained Celerinus is, and what dutiful regard he pays to our body."

It is probable that he was officially examined and set free before Easter, as at the time of the feast he seems to have been much exercised on behalf of his two sisters, Numeria and Candida, who had denied their faith, and to have wept for them in dust and ashes.¹ He was certainly at liberty, and visiting Cyprian at Carthage, while Moyses was yet alive;² at whatever time it was that he was imprisoned, he was released after nineteen days of torture and questioning.³ He faced the terrible emperor himself, and disarmed his fury by his confession.⁴ Of his noble endurance Cyprian writes:⁵ "Though his body was in chains, his spirit remained free and untrammelled; his flesh wasted away through long hunger and thirst, but God fed his faithful soul with spiritual food. There he lay amid his tor-

¹ Ep. 21, "Celerinns Luciano," § 2: "In die lætitiae Paschæ."

² Ep. 37, § 1, writing to Moyses and the rest, Cyprian says, "Celerinus adveniens."

³ Ep. 39, § 2 (H., p. 582). ⁴ Ep. 22, § 1 (H., p. 533).

⁵ Ep. 39, § 2 (H., p. 582).

tures, stronger than the torture ; he was captive, but stronger than his captors ; though bound, he was stronger than those who bound him ; imprinted on his limbs and muscles may still be seen the traces of his long privations."

Urbanus, Sidonius, and Macarius are probably among the *ceteri*¹ to whom, with Moyses and Maximus, the letters of Cyprian are addressed. These confessors were permitted to write² and receive letters,³ and, if the practice was the same as at Carthage, visitors were admitted to their prison-chamber. The Roman presbyteral council admit the deep debt which they owe to Cyprian for his cheering letters to the confessors of their Church,⁴ whereby they were sustained in their long trial, while continually refusing to win release by denying their faith,⁵ and yet earnestly desiring the death which was as rigorously refused to them.⁶ These are the only Roman confessors of whom we receive any information from the letters of Cyprian. One and all (with the excep-

¹ *E.g.*, the title to Cyprian's Ep. 37. To these add Augendus (Ep. 50, l. 6), and Saturninus (Ep. 21, § 4).

² Cyprian, Ep. 30 (H., p. 552).

³ Ep. xxxi. is to Cyprian from the confessors, who say (l. 3), "acceptis litteris tuis erecti sumus."

⁴ Ep. 30, § 5 (H., p. 553).

⁵ Ep. 37 (H., p. 576, l. 23).

⁶ Ep. 31 (H., p. 561).

tion, of course, of Celerinus, who had returned to Africa, and of Moyses, who died in prison, and was not rigorously inclined towards the *lapsi*),¹ the confessors, on obtaining their liberty, joined the schism of Novatian, maintaining a severe attitude towards the *lapsi*, and a violent opposition to Cornelius.² It is probable that they were set free in the course of the spring of 251, and their subsequent action in the matter of the schism of Novatian will be discussed in a later chapter.

We are indebted to Lucianus³ for a list of twelve confessors at Rome, of whom we know nothing but their names. Celerinus is asked to salute Saturninus and his friends, Collecta and Emerita, Calpurnius and Maria, Sabina, Spesina, and three sisters, Januaria, Dativa, and Donata. The preponderance of female names in this company of confessors is very remarkable. Celerinus himself was by this time at liberty, but whether these confessors were awaiting trial or not it is impossible to decide.

In the ‘Acta Sanctorum’ for May 19⁴ we

¹ Ep. 55 (H., p. 627, l. 7).

² Ep. 54 (H., p. 622, l. 9). In granting *libelli* as confessors, however, their conduct was unexceptionable.

³ Ep. 22, “Lucianus Celerino” (H., p. 535, 10-14).

⁴ Bollandists, May, vol. iv. p. 301.

find the *Acta* of Parthenius and Calocerus, who were apparently martyred in this persecution.¹ The point has been much discussed, but the balance of evidence is slightly in favour of this conclusion. That they were actually martyred is certain, from the discovery in a chamber in the cemetery of Callistus of a stone bearing the inscription—

PARTENIO MARTIRI. CALOCERO MARTIRI.

De Rossi suggests they were originally buried here, and their remains removed in the reign of Diocletian to avoid profanation when the cemeteries were confiscated in 303 by the emperor's order.² They were accused before Decius himself of being Christians and of having wasted the fortune of Anatolia, who had been left in their charge by her father Æmilianus on his death. The emperor, irritated by their refusal to sacrifice in obedience to his threats,

¹ Against the words in the ‘*Martyrol. Hieron.*, “a Decio occisi sunt,” must be set those in the ‘*Index Philocal.*’ (*Depositio martyrum*), which says, “xiii. Kal. Jnnias Partheni et Caloceri in Callisti Diocletiano viii. et Maximiano viii. coss.” But the internal evidence, which gives rightly the name of the consul for 250, in whose service they were, is stronger than the assertion that Decius killed them after Xystus the bishop and Lanrentins the deacon. (From Aubé, p. 253.)

² De Rossi, R. S., vol. ii. cp. 34, pp. 210-219.

handed them over to Libanius the prefect, who, after torturing them unsuccessfully, ordered them to be burnt alive.

There is, without doubt, a considerable substratum of fact in this account of the examination and death of the two Armenian eunuchs, but the insertion of a promise from Libanius and Decius that if they sacrifice they shall gain the friendship of the emperor, seems lacking in authority.

Our official information carries us but little further. We learn that two Persians of high position, Abdon and Sennen, were buried in the cemetery of Pontianus, "quod est ad ursum pileatum," on July 30. From their appearing in this list we gather that they were martyrs.¹

It will be seen that this investigation enables us only to give the names of, at most, six Christians who met their deaths at Rome during the Decian persecution. It is probable that, with so vast a population, anything like a systematic inquiry into the religious faith of the lower strata of the community was impracticable. We know that it was possible in Rome to avoid sacrificing by the payment of a sum of money,² while there

¹ Dep. Martyr. in 'Cat. Lib. (Duchesne), p. 11.

² Cyprian, Ep. 21 (H., p. 531). Celerinus writes of his sister : "Quia pro se dona numeravit ne sacrificaret."

were doubtless many other ways of evading actual obedience to the law. In Spain we read that even two bishops received certificates attesting compliance with the edict.¹ The granting of these certificates was in force also at Rome, as will be seen from a letter to Cyprian² from the Roman clergy, who describe the general situation with regard to the *lapsi*. "We have carefully explained our attitude," they write, "towards those who betrayed their faith by unlawfully putting forward those blasphemous certificates, as though they thought they were thus to escape the meshes of the devil's net, although they were as guilty as if they had really sacrificed, because they attested that they had actually done so; and not only towards these, but also towards those who had their names enrolled as having complied, although they were not present in person when it was done; and yet they were virtually present, seeing they gave orders for their names to be inscribed. He has denied Christianity who wishes to give the impression that he has complied with the edicts against Christianity, in virtue of the very fact that he was anxious to appear to have done so. Further, we have shown our unanimous condem-

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 67 (H., p. 735). Ep. 67, § 6 (H., p. 740).

² Ep. 30, § 3 (H., p. 550).

nation of those who, led away by the pollution of their minds, have polluted with forbidden sacrifices their hands and lips." From this passage we gather that large numbers had lapsed during the persecution, while elsewhere in the same epistle we learn¹ that there were very many of these who sought to be restored to Church membership. We read that the two sisters of Celerinus² sought to atone for their past fall by ministering zealously to the wants of certain refugees in Rome.

While the persecution was at its height a sufficient number of the officials of the Roman Church were at large to form a presbyteral council, probably directed from the catacombs, and to carry on³ the ordinary duties of the Church, such as the consolation of penitents, the relief of widows and afflicted, the visiting of those who were in prison or whose goods had been confiscated, the strengthening of the faith of the catechumens, and above all the burial of the dead, and especially of the martyrs—a work seemingly attended with the greatest danger. We thus see that it

¹ Ep. 30, § 6 (H., p. 554).

² Ep. 21 (H., p. 532). Numeria and Candida ministered to sixty-five confessors who arrived at the port.

³ Ep. 8, § 3 (H., p. 487).

was possible for many Christians to move about unnoticed among the vast population of Rome: this conclusion is confirmed in the strongest manner by the fact that no fewer than sixty-five confessors arrived in Rome from Africa,¹ who were met at the harbour, escorted to the city, and ministered to by such penitent women as those mentioned above. We read also that several bishops² from neighbouring provinces took refuge in the imperial city from the severity of the persecution.

We have thus seen that by the end of 250 only five Christians with whose names we are acquainted had suffered death, while many others had endured the torture and the prison-house; and that in January 251 Moyses died, while in the spring his companions were set at liberty, and joined in the dispute over the election of a bishop. Thereafter ensued a copious correspondence between the churchmen of Carthage and Rome, while in September Cornelius, at length recognised as bishop by Cyprian, held a synod at Rome, which was attended by sixty bishops and many priests and laymen.³

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 21 (H., p. 532).

² Ep. 30, § 8 (H., p. 556).

³ Ep. 55, § 6 (H., p. 628).

There is a wide divergence of opinion among critics as to the reason for the abatement of the persecution in the early part of 251, so far as to allow a bishop not only to be elected but to remain undisturbed in his position. Tillemont suggests¹ that the emperor (after having experienced the constancy of Celerinus and heard the faithful answers of Achatius) changed his attitude, and relented so far as to permit the Christians to live in peace, and to realise that they were a harmless and loyal people. But he goes so far as to admit that the relative immunity which Cornelius enjoyed in performing the duties of his office coincided with the absence from Rome of Decius, who was engaged in the campaign against the Goths, and in suppressing the rebellion of Lucius Priscus in Macedonia. M. Aubé² suggests that the emperor found that public opinion was indifferent, and did not support his policy of compulsion, which disturbed profoundly the ordinary relations of civic intercourse, and that he therefore allowed the flame of persecution to burn itself out. We may put aside at once the idea that Decius had relented at the time of the election of Cornelius, if we accept Cyprian's state-

¹ Tillemont, *Mém. Ecclés.*, iii. pt. ii. p. 157.

² Aubé, *cp. i.* p. 71.

ment¹ that the emperor received the news of the appearance of a rival for the empire with more equanimity than that of the election of a bishop at Rome. If we bear in mind the fact that he had been away from the city since May in the previous year, we shall easily understand how the public ardour would cool, and how the magistrates, feeling that the task on which they were engaged was at once unprofitable and unpopular, and trusting that the campaign against the Goths would prove to be a long one, would be disposed to turn their attention to other matters more congenial to their tastes than the persecution of a creed which numbered among its adherents many of their most intimate acquaintances.

We know very little of the effect of the edict in other parts of Europe. Cyprian mentions² that Basilides and Martialis, the bishops of Legio and Asturica in Spain respectively, had defiled themselves by receiving *libelli*; and that, while Basilides had blasphemed Christ, Martialis (who frequented the filthy banquets of the Gentiles, and had buried his sons in company with the heathen in unconsecrated ground) had ratified his

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 55, § 9 (H., p. 630, l. 17).

² Cyprian, Ep. 67, § 6 (H., p. 740).

denial of Christ by a public declaration before the ducenary procurator, besides involving himself in other heinous actions.

The Bollandists give the “Acta” of certain other martyrs, which are, however, without authority. We read of Fusca, who died at Ravenna,¹ and Nicon, who was martyred at Messina.² The Acts of St Agatha of Catana, as given by the Metaphrast, are also probably worthless; since, even if the chronicler had obtained a biography of the martyr, it must be admitted that any truth there is in the history is so overlaid with the miraculous that it is difficult to discover the border-line between history and fiction. Lastly, we have the account of the death of Saturninus,³ Bishop of Tolosa, at the hands of an infuriated mob. Although he was not a victim of official persecution, it is interesting to notice in his case one of the last survivals of popular prejudice against the Christians. We read⁴ that he was one of seven bishops ordained for missionary work in Gaul, five of whom died a natural

¹ A. S., February, ii. p. 645.

² A. S., March, ii. p. 442.

³ Ruinart, *Acta Selecta*, p. 109.

⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.*, i. cp. 28.

death, while Dionysius of Paris was slain with the sword, and Saturninus was hurled from the Capitol of Toulouse.

Here our somewhat meagre evidence ends, and we are brought to the close of our review of the persecution in Europe.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PERSECUTION IN AFRICA.

RECEPTION OF THE EDICT AT CARTHAGE — VOLUNTARY EXILE — CYPRIAN — HIS PREVIOUS HISTORY — DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM THE CITY — CARE FOR HIS CHURCH — CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ROMAN CLERGY AND CARTHAGE — CIRCUMSTANCES OF AN EXILE'S LOT — THE "SACRIFICATI" — THE DAY FOR SACRIFICING — THE FIRST TRIBUNAL — METHODS OF COMPLIANCE — THE ACT OF WORSHIP — PAINFUL SIGHTS — THE COMMAND TO SACRIFICE MIGHT BE REPEATED — SOME CHRISTIANS MISLED BY THEIR CLERGY, OTHERS OVERCOME BY TORTURE — CLERGY WHO LAPSED — THE CONFESSORS — SERGIUS, ROGATIANUS, AND OTHERS — MANY WERE BANISHED — ARRIVAL OF THE PROCONSUL — MAPPALICUS — LUCIANUS AND OTHERS — TREATMENT OF THOSE "LAPSI" WHO WERE DANGEROUSLY ILL — LETTER OF CYPRIAN TO THE ROMAN CONFESSORS — SATURNINUS AND AURELIUS — NUMIDICUS — CASE OF THE "LAPSI" AT CAPSA — ORDINATION OF CONFESSORS — NUMBER OF MARTYRS — RELEASE OF CONFESSORS — CYPRIAN'S PROLONGED ABSENCE — THE 'ACTA TERENTII' — CYPRIAN'S RETURN.

APPENDIX. THE "LIBELLUS."

THE edict reached Carthage, the chief seat of Christianity in proconsular Africa, in the early months of 250. It prescribed a day on which

the inhabitants of the city should join in sacrificing to the gods, in token of gratitude for past blessings and of a pious desire for their continuance. The interval was employed in different ways by the members of the Christian body, according to the part that Christianity played in the life of each.

Some took no heed of the proclamation ; others sought security in retirement ; while by far the greater number of nominal members of the Church, immediately on the receipt of the edict, hurried off to sacrifice, and to procure certificates attesting their loyalty to the worship of the empire.

Those who remained unmoved by the threats of the emperor will occupy our attention later : for the present we must consider the cases of those who retired into voluntary exile and those who complied with the edict.

Among the first to retire was Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, who had only held his office for the space of two years. Converted to Christianity in 246, under the influence of an aged presbyter named Cæcilian,¹ he was ordained priest in the following year, and succeeded Donatus² in

¹ Pontius, *Vita Cypriani*, § 4.

² Cyprian, Ep. 59 (H., p. 677, l. 17).

the see of Carthage¹ in 248, much to the chagrin of various officials of the local Church, whose policy will be noticed in another chapter.² “The new bishop was a man of the middle classes, who, while possessing the pardonable failing which makes a rhetorician always smack of the schools, yet brought to the service of the Church the rare qualities of a strong man—firmness without harshness, tact in dealing with men and accommodating himself to circumstances, an equal sense of his rights and his duties, together with a zealous regard for order and discipline. In the Church he was not so much a doctor as a statesman, we might almost say a general.”³ But now, at the beginning of 250, appeared the edict, by which he, as a bishop of the Christian Church, was proscribed.⁴ What course was he to pursue? A deserter from the ranks of paganism, he was the chief figure among the Christians; he was obnoxious to the fanatical passions of the African rabble, who would so soon be crying for him to

¹ Pontius, *Vita Cypriani*, § 5.

² Cyprian, Ep. 43 (p. 591).

³ Aubé, p. 78.

⁴ Pontius, *Vita Cypriani*, § 7. Cyprian, Ep. 59, § 6 (H., p. 679, 11). Cf. also Cyprian, Ep. 66, § 4 (H., p. 729, 12): “Persecutio . . . me . . . proscriptionis onere depresso cum publice legeretur, Si quis TENET POSSIDET DE BONIS CÆCILI CYPRIANI EPISCOPI CHRISTIANORVM.”

be thrown to the lions.¹ What would be more serviceable to the cause, what could bring greater glory to himself, than to fall a martyr to his convictions, and head his soldiers in the splendid battle?² But in opposition to this question there arose in his mind another:³ What was to become of the Church? who was to exhort the lapsed to seek repentance, the heretic to return to the truth? who would there be to console the Christians for the loss of all their earthly possessions? who would animate the confessors to face martyrdom? Such were the considerations that forced themselves upon the mind of Cyprian, and decided his course for him. He was no coward: he did not flee in 250 before the death which he so calmly met in 258. His biographer strives to remove any doubt on this point by the record of Cyprian's unselfish generosity to the people of Carthage during the plague which broke out in the reign of Gallus.⁴ He himself writes to the clergy of Rome:⁵ "As the Lord gave commandment,⁶ immediately on the appearance of trouble, when the people had fiercely and repeatedly clam-

¹ Ep. 59, § 6 (H., p. 673): "Totiens ad leonem petitus."

² Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 55 (H., p. 625, 19).

³ Pontius, *Vita Cypriani*, § 7.

⁴ Ibid., §§ 8, 9.

⁵ Cyprian, Ep. 20 (H., p. 527, 8).

⁶ St Matthew, x. 23.

oured for my blood, I withdrew, taking thought rather for the tranquillity of the Church than for my own safety, in order to prevent a further outbreak of the animosity which had been fired by my unwelcome presence.¹ But though absent in the body, neither in mind nor in spirit was I behindhand in taking what thought I could for our brethren."

Cyprian was thus too thoughtful to be a cause of persecution to the Church in Carthage by remaining there, and too prudent to deprive his people of their head. He faced, therefore, the penalty following upon voluntary exile—namely, the confiscation of his entire property—knowing that he would be able to give all necessary directions to his subordinates from his hiding-place. He writes to the presbyters of Carthage:² "Since my present position prevents me from acting in company with you, I appeal to your sense of duty and your faith to perform in the city your own duties and mine, that there be no want of care or discipline. With regard to the contribution for the confessors in prison, or the poor and needy who still stand fast in the Lord, I ask that everything be diligently attended to,

¹ Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 7 (H., p. 485, 1-5).

² Cyprian, Ep. 5 (H., pp. 478, 479).

since the money which was collected was distributed to the clergy for objects of this nature. I entreat you also to use all your energies to avoid provocation : the confessors in prison should only be visited by you in small numbers, and with a constant change of visitors. Anything like overbearing and fanatical behaviour is zealously to be guarded against." His care for the Church in his absence may be seen from his words elsewhere:¹ " Whenever you write to tell me that tranquillity has been restored, or if the Lord think fit to warn me, I will return to you. . . . Take, I entreat you, diligent care of the widows, the sick, and all the poor; but especially help any poor strangers out of my own property, which I left in the charge of our fellow - presbyter, Rogatianus. In case it has all been expended, I have sent him another portion by the hand of Naricus the acolyth, that the work may be carried on more speedily and liberally." In another passage he points out² that the inferior clergy are the proper channels for dispensing charity under the circumstances, as no irritation was caused by their presence, and consequently there was little reason for alarm. He gives directions also that,

¹ Ep. 7 (H., p. 485, 5).

² Ep. 14 (H., p. 510, 12).

although the wants of most of the confessors were carefully supplied by the brethren, if there were any exceptions, the need should be supplied from the Church funds.

We thus see that, although Cyprian was compelled to retire from personal intercourse with the Church, his care for it was in no way diminished, while the dangerous crisis was successfully faced, thanks to Tertullus,¹ a dear brother, as he is called, who not only acted as special messenger between the bishop and his flock, but was also the author of the plan whereby Cyprian entered upon a "less public mode of life, and was able to avoid appearing before the eyes of the people, and particularly of the frequenters of that spot where he had been so frequently shouted for."

It is to the earlier part of Cyprian's retirement, probably before April² 250, that we must assign the curious correspondence, which is extant, between the Bishop of Carthage and the Roman clergy. The latter, having lost their

¹ Ep. 14 (H., p. 510, 7).

² We gather this from Ep. viii. (from the Roman clergy): "Strengthen with your exhortations the hearts of those that are fallen, that if they be arraigned again, they may make confession of their faith"; referring to the trial first before the "pusilliores," then before the proconsul.

bishop, Fabianus, prepared a letter¹ to Cyprian, as Bishop of Carthage, detailing the facts of his martyrdom. While they were waiting for a messenger, Clementius, a subdeacon, arrived from Carthage, bearing the news that the Church there had also lost its bishop, who had abandoned his flock.² The Roman clergy, on hearing the report of Clementius, thought it their duty, as the representative clergy³ of the Church of the metropolis, to write a letter of counsel⁴ to the deserted clergy: this letter was written in vulgar Latin, probably on paper differing from that of the epistle already prepared, and by another hand, a fact which immediately filled Cyprian with suspicion, seeing that neither the writers nor the intended receivers of the letter were specified.⁵ By some means, perhaps through the instrumentality of Clementius, these letters fell into Cyprian's hands: he returned the second, that to the clergy, with the request that he might be informed whether it was genuine, while later on he wrote again,⁶ explaining the cause of his withdrawal. The letter from the Roman clergy to those of

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 9 (H., p. 489, 1).

² Ep. 8: "Didicimus secessisse benedictum Papatem Cyprianum."

³ Ep. 8 (H., p. 486, l. 6).

⁵ Cyprian, Ep. 9, § 2 (H., p. 489, l. 12).

⁴ I.e., Ep. 8.

⁶ Ep. 20.

Carthage had been highly practical: knowing that Cyprian, as a bishop, could be deposed by none but a bishop, they regarded his influence and authority as temporarily in abeyance, and gave such advice as their own experience suggested, being the while unaware of the fact that Cyprian was ruling his Church with the same care as in time past.¹ Cyprian was naturally indignant (Ep. 9) at the reference to the hiring in the Roman letter, and simultaneously with the detailed description of his position (Ep. 20) which he wrote when the momentary irritation had passed off, he forwarded as many as thirteen letters, written previously, and containing words of counsel to his clergy or to the Church at large.² Immediately on discovering their error, the Roman clergy wrote to those of Carthage, and resumed communion with Cyprian himself, to the great satisfaction of the bishop.³ The temporary retirement of Cyprian does not seem to have been passed under the conditions

¹ Clementius had left Carthage "imminente agone"; Cyprian evidently (Ep. 9) regarded his position as endangered, although there is no evidence of any presumptuous intention on the part of the Roman clergy.

² Ep. 20 (H., p. 527, l. 16).

³ Cyprian, Ep. 27 (H., p. 544, 9). Cf. generally Müller, p. 209 ff., and Cyprian, Ep. 31 (H., p. 562, 1).

of discomfort which were wont to surround exiles of this class. Dionysius of Alexandria and Gregory Thaumaturgus of Neo-Caesarea suffered hardships such as we have no hint from Cyprian that he himself endured, although he gives pictures of the risks run by those who took this step: "A man leaves his entire property and goes into exile, and when he is in the desert or in hiding, he perhaps encounters robbers, or dies through fever or exhaustion."¹ Elsewhere he writes:² "If, in his flight over the mountains or deserts, he is met by a robber, or attacked by a wild beast, or afflicted with cold or hunger or thirst, or if, as he speeds across the sea, he perishes in a storm, Christ watches over His soldier wherever he is fighting, and, if he dies by persecution for the glory of His name, He gives him his reward."

The names of those who had withdrawn into voluntary exile would become known as soon as the time came to go through the lists of the inhabitants, when such as had fled would be noted, and their property confiscated. They were doubtless anxious to return as soon as possible, but Cyprian knew that their reappear-

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 57 (H., p. 654, 1).

² Ep. 58 (H., p. 659, 23).

ance would be nearly as dangerous to the general peace as his own, since they were now more than ever obnoxious to the law. In the early summer of 250 he writes¹ that the time for his return was not yet at hand ; and in the following letter² he adds that, when the confessors who had been exiled and despoiled had not yet returned, it was very early for the lapsed to be knocking at the door of the Church. In his letter to the clergy of Rome³ he mentions sending a message of reproof to the confessors, who were probably over-anxious to return. When the persecution was at last over, the exiles were received into the houses of friends, who extended to them hospitality ; and we read of one man who, though himself a *lapsus*, had compensated for the injury he had inflicted on his own soul by his gift of safety and protection to many others.⁴ From those who thus took advantage of the opportunity, afforded by the short interval preceding the day of sacrifice, to secrete themselves, we pass to those who obeyed the commands of the emperor.

The number of those who, when the blow fell,

¹ Ep. 18 (H., p. 523, 17).

² Ep. 19 (H., p. 526, 10).

³ Ep. 20 (H., p. 527, 19). Cf. also Ep. 13 (H., p. 507, 2).

⁴ Ep. 55 (H., p. 633, 10).

were prepared to sacrifice everything for their faith, was comparatively small. We have seen in an earlier chapter how very different was the spirit which now actuated the Church from that which had swayed it a century before, and we are therefore not surprised to read Cyprian's complaints:¹ "At the very first publication of the threatening words of our foe, the greater part of the brethren, far from being stunned by the blow, voluntarily fell away and betrayed their faith. . . . All the past vanished from their minds; they did not even wait to be summoned, much less to refuse to obey the command. Before the battle began many were conquered and overthrown without meeting the shock, not even delaying long enough to give the appearance of sacrificing against their will. Unbidden they hastened to the forum, bent upon spiritual death, as though this had been their long-cherished desire, and they were now embracing an opportunity they had urgently sought. As night fell, the magistrates put off a great number till the morrow, but how many of them entreated that their fall might not be delayed! . . . They spurred one another on with encouraging words, and in turn pledged each other in the cup of death." We should

¹ *De lapsis*, §§ 7, 8, 9.

gather from the words of Cyprian¹ that by far the greater number of the members of the Church apostatised, among whom were actually some of the clergy.²

It is probable that only such as felt that they would incur suspicion or might become the objects of the popular fury rushed to sacrifice (and perhaps to obtain *libelli*) with the haste which Cyprian describes. Those who had in this way obtained the *libellus* would feel themselves secure henceforth against any of the vaguely awful threats of the edict.

The appointed day having arrived, the *citizens* would appear in due order before the tribunal, where a body of inquisitors specially commissioned for the occasion was assembled, composed of the local magistrates and five of the magnates of the place.³

This tribunal was spoken of as that of the *pusilliores*,⁴ and to face it was the first test of the strength of a Christian's faith. Cyprian, writing to Rogatianus and the other confessors, exhorts

¹ Ep. 14 (H., p. 509, 8), Ep. 11 (H., p. 495, 17), and Ep. 11 (H., p. 501, 16).

² Ep. 14 (H., p. 509, 8) and Ep. 40 (H., p. 586, 8).

³ Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 43 (H., p. 592, 9).

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 22 (Lucianus Celerino) (H., p. 533, 9): "Homini qui apud *pusilliores* nomen Dei confessus sum."

them “by their common faith, by the true and unmixed love he felt for them, bravely to persevere in their glorious career, after defeating the adversary in their *first conflict*.¹ To these magistrates were intrusted all the preliminary stages of the prosecution, in order that when the proconsul arrived in April or May a complete report might be ready for him, while the few remaining Christians whose refractory behaviour had baffled the lower officials might be amenable to his greater powers. This body did not possess the *ius gladii*,—it could only order proscription, banishment, confiscation, and imprisonment. There were therefore no martyrs before the arrival of the proconsul, but even these milder methods were sufficient to overcome the scruples of many.² The threats of the local magistrates³ and the jeers of the excited multitude were enough to shake the faith, at no time very strong, of many of Cyprian’s flock.

It was possible to deny the Christian faith either by public act or by private declaration. In the latter case, the magistrate, for a given

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 13 (H., p. 505, 5).

² Cf. Dodwell, Dissert. Cyprian., xi. § 53.

³ Cyprian, De lapsis, § 28 (H., p. 258). Ep. 56 (H., p. 648, 11).

sum, signed a certificate attesting that the individual in question had sacrificed, when in reality he had not done so. In this way safety was ensured to the holder of the certificate without his having actually complied with the edict. The fallacy in the distinction is apparent, but the *lapsi* were regularly divided into two classes, the *sacrificati* and the *libellatici*. With the *sacrificati* and *thurificati* we shall now proceed to deal, but, having explained the significance of the term *libellatici*, it will suffice to discuss the *libellus* in an appendix to this chapter.

It is probable that the act of worship consisted of two parts.¹ The worshipper would approach the altar in the morning, and, if a person of property, would sacrifice the flesh of some animal he brought with him,² while, if poor, he would throw a handful of incense on the altar: in the afternoon a sacrificial feast would take place, presided over by the temple officials, the *νεωκόροι*, at which the *εἰδωλόθυτα* would be eaten, and the seal set upon the apostasy of the morning. Writing of the confessors,³ Cyprian says: “Their

¹ Cf. ‘Acta Pionii,’ sub init. . οἱ τεταγμένοι ἀναζητεῖν καὶ ἔλκειν τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς ἐπιθύειν καὶ μιαροφαγεῖν.

² Cyprian, De lapsis, § 8 (H., p. 243).

³ Ibid., § 2 (H., p. 237, 21).

faithful voice proclaimed Christ, on whom they had once for all believed: the noble hands, accustomed to none but holy works, refused the profane sacrifices; their lips, hallowed with food divine, could not endure, after the body and blood of the Lord, the unholy touch of the food that remained over from the idol-feasts; their heads remained free from the accursed veil wherewith those who offered covered themselves.” It was in the Capitol¹ that the official sacrifices took place on the fixed day: previously, as we have seen, the forum² had sufficed for an informal and premature compliance. The general apostasy was not unaccompanied by terrible portents.³ “One who had voluntarily mounted to the Capitol with the purpose of sacrificing was seized with dumbness immediately after he had done the deed. A woman while standing in the baths bit through her tongue, which had tasted and uttered the evil thing. After she had taken the accursed food, the folly she had wrought with her mouth turned to her destruction. She became her own murderer, and soon died after suffering internal agonies.” The fear of divine vengeance tortured

¹ Cyprian, *De lapsis*, § 8 (H., p. 242, 18).

² *L. c.*: “Utro ad forum currere.”

³ *De lapsis*, §§ 24, 25 (H., pp. 255, 256).

the minds of many who had denied their God. Cyprian relates another case: a Christian child, whose parents had fled from the persecution, was brought by its nurse before the magistrates. Too young to eat meat, it was given bread soaked in wine, which remained over from the sacrifices of those who had preceded it. A short time after, the child was restored to its mother, who brought it with her to the Christian assembly, when the Eucharist was about to be celebrated. The deacon offered the cup to the child, which was seized with such a violent fit of choking that the bystanders beheld in the circumstance an act of divine justice, and remembered that the child had partaken of unhallowed food.

The twofold act of compliance was apparently in use at Rome as well as at Carthage, if we may judge from the words of the Roman confessors to Cyprian:¹ "The hands stained with the profane sacrifice must be cleansed by good works, the lips befouled with the blasphemous food must be purified by the speech of true penitence." It is reasonable to suppose that, in writing his epistle to Antonianus,² Cyprian had before his mind actual examples of men who

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 31 (H., p. 563, 11).

² Ep. 55 (H., p. 633, 1-14).

had lapsed and compelled their entire families to lapse also, and again of others whose own obedience to the edict answered for that of their families, and who were thus able to relieve them from the necessity of sacrificing.

It is plain that many who had once satisfied the requirements of the edict, were again put to the test,¹ perhaps as the result of delation. Cyprian writes:² “Some who had sacrificed were, later on, upon a repeated examination, sent into exile: they seem to have atoned for their fault by giving up their property and houses, and penitently following Christ. Felix, who had been a presbyter under Decimus, Victoria his wife, and Lucius, all members of the Church, were banished, and forsook their property, which is now confiscated. Again, a woman named Bona was dragged to the altar by her husband, although she had no share in the act, and her hands were held while the sacrifice was performed, when she loudly protested, ‘It is not I, but you, who have sacrificed’: she also has gone into banishment.” Again, we read of “Æmilius and Castus,³ to whom the Lord extended His pardon, iuasmuch as in the first

¹ Ep. 55 (H., p. 625, 24).

² Ep. 24 *passim* (H., pp. 536, 537).

³ De lapsis, § 13 (H., p. 246).

conflict they had been overcome, but in the second were made conquerors, so that they scorned the fire that had before appalled them, and gained the victory in the very point in which they had failed."

Some were actually led into apostasy by their own clergy, since we read¹ of Repostus, who in the persecution not only gave way himself, but by his vicious example persuaded the greater part of his flock to follow him.

Others, again, could claim that they had only sacrificed when compelled to do so by torture, and by the knowledge that still worse horrors remained in store for the refractory. Cyprian offers an excuse for such persons in words which he supposes one of them to utter:² "I was anxious to struggle bravely, and remembering my oath, I put on the armour of faith and devotion, but the endless series of tortures overcame my resolution. My mind stood firm, my faith was strong, and for a long while the pains of torture made no impression on my soul. But when the fury of the judge had broken forth again, and my weary body was being torn with lashes, bruised with clubs, stretched on the rack, pierced with hooks, and burned with fire, my flesh failed, my weakness

¹ Ep. 59, § 10 (H., p. 678).

² De lapsis, § 13 (H., p. 246).

overcame me, and pain subdued my body, though not my heart."

We have seen that a number of the inferior clergy fell away;¹ it remains to mention the names of certain bishops who also denied their faith. Jovinus and Maximus were two bishops who afterwards joined Privatus and Repostus (the latter, as we have seen, himself a *lapsus*)² in a schismatic movement. Cyprian says of Jovinus and Maximus that they had been condemned by the sentence of a council of his colleagues for sacrificing to idols, and on other charges which had been brought against them. Fortunatianus also, the Bishop of Assuras,³ caused Cyprian great anxiety, because he "dared to claim the priesthood which he had deserted, as though it were allowable to pass from the altars of the devil to the altar of God."

It is probable that by far the greater number of the *lapsi* fell away before the advent of the proconsul, although it seems likely that on his arrival a further demand was made on the more important of those Christians who had sacrificed, in order to ascertain whether their conversion was

¹ Ep. 14 (H., p. 509, 8). Cf. also Ep. 24, where we read of Felix, "qui presbyterium subministrabat."

² Ep. 59, § 10 (H., p. 678, 5). ³ Ep. 65 *passim* (H., p. 721).

genuine: perhaps also delation was at work in cases of this kind.¹

The problems connected with the restitution of the *lapsi* will require a separate chapter, and we may now pass without delay to those who confessed their faith.

All those who had no intention of complying with the demands of the edict let the appointed day pass without appearing at the altars. From the moment that they did not answer to their names, which one of the officers of the tribunal called out from a list, they had rendered themselves liable to punishment. Search was instituted for them, and on their apprehension they were either brought before the tribunal without delay, or thrown into prison until it was convenient for their case to be tried. The search for the Christians and their arrest by the police marks the end of the first phase of the persecution (called by Aubé a period of “*effroi préventif*”) and the beginning of the second.

We can have but little doubt that during this first period the utmost use was made of informers, who could penetrate where the official eye might

¹ Ep. 24 (H., p. 536, 12): “*Iterato temptati.*” Cf. De lapsis, § 13 (H., p. 246, 22). Cf. *l. c.*: “*Durissimi iudicis recrudescente sævitia.*”

never reach, and, in consideration of receiving some portion of the property of the accused, could be trusted not to allow their power to lie dormant. The passion for delation grew into a fanatic fury,¹ which spurred on the officials, who were anxious to conciliate the popular favour, with the result that the more prominent Christians had little chance of escape.

The first confessors of whom we read are Sergius,² Rogatianus, and Felicissimus,³ who with others—not a few of whom were women⁴—had been cast into prison.⁵ Rogatianus, of whom Cyprian speaks in terms of the highest praise,⁶ had been intrusted by the bishop with a considerable sum,⁷ to be distributed among the poor and any strangers who required assistance; but that task, together with the duty of visiting⁸ and assisting⁹ the confessors, would now of necessity devolve upon others. The tribunal put into force immediately its power of condemning to exile,¹⁰

¹ Cf. Peters in his article “Decius” in Wetzer and Welte’s ‘Kirchen-Lexicon.’

² Ep. 6 (H., p. 480): “SERGIO ET ROGATIANO ET CETERIS CONFESSORIBVS.” Cf. also p. 484, 10.

³ Ep. 6 (H., p. 484, 9).

⁴ Ep. 6 (H., p. 482, 22).

⁵ Ep. 6 (H., p. 480, 19).

⁶ Ep. 6 (H., p. 484, 6).

⁷ Ep. 7 (H., p. 485, 11).

⁸ Ep. 5 (H., p. 479, 8) and Ep. 14 (H., p. 510, 20).

⁹ Ep. 5 (H., p. 478, 16).

¹⁰ Ep. 10 (H., p. 490, 6).

while, in order doubtless to engage the popular sympathy,¹ it exceeded its powers, and went so far as to put to torture a number of Christians.² Cyprian writes at this time to the confessors in a triumphant strain:³ “The more bravely your confession is made, the greater is the honour due to you. As the battle grows fiercer, so grows the fame of the combatants. So far from being held back from the fray by fear of torture, ye were rather spurred on by the very anguish, and, strong in your devotion, ye stepped forth to engage in the great fight. Some, I hear, have already received the crown, some have nearly attained to it; all those soldiers of the noble army who have been imprisoned have burned with one desire for the fight, as is only right in the holy camp of Christ; your constancy is not deceived and made to fail by means of enticing words, threats have no weight, tortures and anguish are unsuccessful, because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Why should the pains of earth cast you down rather than the support of heaven raise you? Proof was given when our brethren entered the proud fight, for they showed all the others how to overcome torture, and gave an ex-

¹ Ep. 6 (H., p. 484, 9).

² Ep. 10 (H., p. 491, 5).

³ Ep. 10 (H., p. 490, 7; p. 491, 2).

ample of valour and faith : they fought in the forefront of the battle, until the enemy retired vanquished before them."

How it was that some of the clergy and deacons, while regularly visiting the confessors in prison,¹ burying the bodies of the martyrs² (a duty involving no small risk), and granting assistance to such poor persons as were ostensibly Christians, succeeded in escaping arrest, it is impossible to say ; but throughout the persecution we find the work of the Church continuously carried on, while messengers passed between Rome or Carthage and Cyprian in his retirement.

The first tribunal awarded the punishment of exile in a very large number of cases. We read that Statius and Severianus, accompanied by sixty-three others, took refuge in Rome, where they were ministered to by women belonging to the local church.³ Others were less fortunate. Of Aurelius⁴ we learn that he was first banished, and, on the arrival of the proconsul, tortured. If with these passages we compare that which describes the hard case of Ninus, Clementianus, and

¹ Ep. 5 (H., p. 479, 14, 15).

² Ep. 8 (H., p. 488, 3-5). Ep. 12 (H., p. 502, 15).

³ Ep. 21 (H., p. 532, 9).

⁴ Ep. 38 (H., p. 581, 1 ff.)

Florus,¹ who braved the threats of the magistrates, but on the arrival of the proconsul yielded to torture, we shall be forced to disagree with Dodwell, who asserts² that it was the proconsul who began by inflicting banishment, and later, on finding this plan unsuccessful, proceeded to more violent measures.

With the month of May arrived the proconsul,³ whose advent initiated the second phase of the prosecution. It is probable that but little blood had been shed hitherto, and that the Church, guided by Cyprian, whose hiding-place remained undiscovered, was rallying in a small degree from the effects of the first shock. The proconsul, therefore, proceeded to severe measures without delay.

Mappalicus⁴ was the first to appear before the new and more terrible tribunal. In the midst of his tortures he cried out to the proconsul, “Thou

¹ Ep. 56 (H., p. 648, 9).

² Dodwell, *Dissert. Cyprian.*, xi. § 53.

³ Cf. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pt. ii. vol. i. p. 657. The governors of senatorial provinces, by an order of Claudius (in force in A.D. 115), were required to start for their provinces before the middle of April (*Dion. Cass.*, lx. 17). The proconsuls would not enter on their office till May.

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 10 (H., p. 492, 15).

shalt see a battle to-morrow"; and the next day, amid renewed tortures, he attained the crown of martyrdom. Cyprian writes:¹ "This, then, was the battle spoken of before by the prophets, fought by Christ, waged by the apostles, which Mappalicus, in his own name and that of his fellows, promised the proconsul that he should see. And he spoke truly, indeed. They saw the battle he had foretold, and he received the palm he so richly deserved. It is my prayer that all ye who remain may follow the example of the blessed martyr and his companions in this encounter, in their strong faith, their endurance of pain, their victory over torture. I exhort you, that as ye have been joined together by the bonds of one confession and the confinement in one prison-house, so ye may be joined together by the consummation of your valour and by the heavenly crown, that ye may gladden the Church, your mother, and wipe from her eyes the tears she sheds for the spiritual death of so many of her sons, and that by your example ye may provoke to emulation all the brethren who yet stand."

Shortly after the death of Mappalicus and his unnamed companions, the bishop writes to his clergy, desiring them to keep a record of the date

¹ Ep. 10 (H., p. 493, 16).

of death of all who died in prison.¹ Tertullus, it is evident, from an allusion to him in this passage, was a very faithful servant to the Church in Carthage. We remember that it was he who prompted Cyprian's retirement, and now we observe that he keeps him well informed as to the dates on which the deaths of martyrs occurred, besides rendering all the assistance in his power to the brethren who still survived.

Not long after Easter Lucianus,² whose correspondence with Celerinus remains to us, and some others, experienced the rigour of the proconsul. On his first appearance before the magistrates, several confessors had been arraigned with him,³ and now he gives us the names of seventeen of his fellow-sufferers who had succumbed to the aggravated tortures ordered by the proconsul. This official seems to have been inspired by a suggestion emanating directly from the emperor⁴ to torment his victims first of all by means of

¹ Ep. 12 (H., p. 503, § 2).

² We gather this from the fact that Lucianus had been tried before the first tribunal before Celerinus wrote to him, which he did shortly after Easter, calling forth an immediate reply from Lucianus: as the news of Lucianus's first confession would have taken some time to reach Rome, it is probable it occurred before Easter. Cf. Ep. 21, from Celerinus (H., p. 530, 19), "in die lætitiae Paschæ flens . . . in cilicio . . . dies exegi et exigo."

³ Ep. 21 (H., p. 531, 14, 15). ⁴ Ep. 22 (H., p. 534, 11).

hunger and thirst, thirteen out of the number dying from these privations. This band of sufferers, among whom Mappalicus is again mentioned, included four women. The names of the party were: Bassus, who was sentenced to the quarries; Fortunio, who succumbed to the hardships of prison life; and Paulus, who died after the torture: the rest — Fortunata, Victorinus, Victor, Herennius, Credula, Hereda, Donatus, Firmus, Venustus, Fructus, Julia, Martialis, and Ariston — died in prison of hunger and thirst. Lucianus writes to Celerinus that he expects soon to follow those whose names he had given; for he had now been incarcerated for a week, and had only been allowed the most scanty pittance of bread and water.¹

Cyprian, who was continually seeking an opportunity of returning to his flock,² writes to his clergy at the beginning of the summer,³ directing them how to treat such of the *lapsi* as were seriously ill. A short time after, there follows a grateful letter to the Roman confessors,⁴ Maximus and Moyses, who had encouraged their Cartha-

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 22, Lucianus Celerino (H., p. 535, 2).

² Ep. 12 (H., p. 504, 1). ³ Ep. 18 (H., p. 523, 17).

⁴ Ep. 28 (H., p. 545), § 2.

ginian brethren in affliction, Saturninus and Aurelius:¹ “Your splendid confession and the good omen of your victory you have supplemented with the tone of dutiful obedience shining through the strong and loving counsels of the letter which you have but recently sent to your brethren, whom their confession of the Lord has bound closely to you, in order that the sacred precepts of the Gospel and the commands once for all delivered to us may be kept with their vitality unimpaired, firmly and consistently. Your glory has advanced to a still higher plane: you have followed your confession with yet a second service to your God: firmly you took your stand in the battle against those who would assail the Gospel; with unfaltering constancy you drove back those whose impious hands attempted to undermine the commandments of God; hitherto you have displayed the rudiments of the virtues, now you exhibit your powers as instructors in sound manners.”

We know no more of the above-mentioned confessor Saturninus than that he was put to the torture by the proconsul, and sent back to prison, and that he did not follow the example of Luci-

¹ Ep. 27 (H., p. 544, 10).

anus in his hot-headed eagerness to restore the lapsed.¹ For Aurelius let Cyprian speak:² “Aurelius our brother is an honourable youth whom the Lord has already tested: a child of God, in years he is yet a stripling, but in faith and constancy he is far advanced; his youth enhances his glory. Twice has he striven in the battle, twice has he confessed and twice gained glory by his victorious confession, first when on the race-course he was sentenced to banishment, and again when the battle raged more fiercely, and he came forth conqueror from the strife of suffering. As often as the adversary challenged the servants of God, this brave soldier was always to the front and fought and conquered. It was not enough for him to enter the battle the first time before but few eyes, when he received sentence of banishment; he was counted worthy to fight in the forum also, that his valour might shine with yet purer lustre, by adding to his defeat of the magistrates the defeat of the pro-consul, and by following up the victory over exile with a victory over the anguish of the torture.”

To the number of the confessors mentioned by Cyprian must be added one more name, that of

¹ Ep. 27 (H., p. 541, 7-9).

² Ep. 38 (H., p. 580, 1 ff.).

Numidicus,¹ “who saw many, encouraged by his exhortations, meet their end and attain to a proud martyrdom, burned or stoned to death; who with a glad heart could look upon his own wife clinging to him, while with the rest the flames consumed her, or (shall I say?) preserved her. He was covered with stones and severely burned, and left for dead; but when his daughter with anxious affection came to seek for the remains of her father,” she found him still breathing, and rescued him.

A letter from Cyprian is preserved² in which the bishop deals with a painful case at Capsa, where Ninus, Clementianus, and Florus had faced boldly the anger of the magistrates and the fury of the mob, but had yielded later to the compulsion exercised by the proconsul, and had fallen from the lofty pinnacle of their first confession. Cyprian decides that pardon is to be granted to *lapsi* such as these, for they had given certain proof that it was merely in consequence of the utter incapacity of the flesh to endure further torture that they had submitted.

To the end of 250 or the early months of 251 belongs a group of three letters from Cyprian (Epistles 38-40), in which he announces that he

¹ Ep. 40 (H., p. 585 *passim*).

² Ep. 56 (H., p. 648), § 1

has made the confessor Aurelius, though very young, a *lector*, and has conferred the same distinction upon the confessor Celerinus. "I would have," he writes,¹ "Celerinus joined in the office of *lector* with Aurelius, with whom he is already joined in the fellowship of divine honour, and to whom he is linked by every mark of valour and worth. They are both alike; their honour is as high as their modesty is great; their advancement in the estimation of heaven corresponds with their submissiveness and humility." Epistle 40 expresses his desire that Numidicus should be enrolled as one of the presbyters at Carthage, and should take his seat on the bench of the council.

It is impossible, after our review of the persecution in North Africa, to agree with the assertion of Dodwell that the martyrdoms in that province were very limited in number.² The letters of Cyprian alone, which do not profess to give a complete list of the various confessions and martyrdoms, record by name seventeen persons who died violent deaths, while we know that others died in prison without having undergone the infliction of actual torture.

It must have been at the end of 250 that the

¹ Ep. 39 (H., p. 584, 6 ff.)

² Dodwell, *Dissert. Cyprian.*, xi. § 53.

popular excitement cooled down, and the pro-consul, in view of the hopeless nature of the attempt to extinguish the Church, turned his attention to other matters sufficiently to allow the presbyter Rogatianus to be set at liberty, as well as the other confessors on whom Church offices had been bestowed. We possess an epistle of Cyprian to four of his colleagues,¹ Caldonius and Herculanus, who, so far as we know, had never been arrested, and Rogatianus and Numidicus, who were both confessors, but who must have been already set at liberty,² to be able to carry out the pro-episcopal visitation which Cyprian requested them to undertake prior to his return. Between the commencement of the visitation and Easter 251 we must allow time for the resuscitation of the faction opposed to Cyprian,³ for the excommunication of all who allied themselves with it,⁴ for notice of these events to be sent to Cyprian, and for the receipt of a reply from him, in which he stated that he would be unable to return before Easter.⁵ In view of these considerations, we shall not be far wrong if we regard the liberation of Rogatianus,

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 41, Title.

² Ep. 41 (H., p. 587, 12).

³ Ep. 41 (H., p. 588, 10).

⁴ Ep. 42 (H., p. 590), *passim*.

⁵ Ep. 43 (H., p. 591, 6).

Numidicus, Aurelius, and the other confessors as having taken place towards the close of the year 250.

In February or March arrived a letter¹ from Cyprian to the entire Church. He expressed his grief for the fact that his banishment, which was now extending into a second year,² was prolonged, not by any trouble from without, but by the seditious action of his old antagonists among the clergy.³ “A greater sorrow falls upon my aching heart, because I am prevented from joining you in this time of anxiety and need, by my desire not to bring upon you greater disquietude by inflaming the minds of those faithless plotters; and whereas it is the duty of a bishop to seek in all things to promote quietness and order, in this case his arrival would seem likely to fan the flame and to cause another outburst of persecution.⁴

Various phrases in the letter point to the fact that the persecution was now a thing of the past. We read, for instance:⁵ “Now is the time, dearly beloved brethren, that ye who stand should bravely persevere, and guard with unbroken

¹ Ep. 43.

² Ep. 43 (H., p. 593, 4).

³ Ep. 43 (H., p. 591, 5).

⁴ Ep. 43 (H., p. 593, 9 fl.).

⁵ Ep. 43 (H., p. 596, 11).

vigilance that proud position which ye maintained in the time of persecution." "This" (the temptation to schismatic action) "is the last, the final assault of the persecution; but through the protecting care of God it also will quickly pass, so that after Easter-day I may stand before you in company with my brother-clergy."¹

During the remainder of his life Cyprian could never forget the agonies which the Church had endured in this short but sharp struggle; they had been burned into his memory. In 255 he writes:² "Patience is the best balm for toil and weariness; it is suitable and necessary for every one in this world, but for none more so than for us, who are harassed above all men by the assaults of the devil; who stand day by day in the ranks of battle, and are never free from wrestling with that old and practised foe. Besides the varying and never-ceasing struggle against temptation, we have to face also the attack of persecution: we have to forsake our property, undergo imprisonment, submit to chains, and count our lives as but nothing—in fact, we have to endure in faith and patience every kind

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 43 (H., p. 596, 19), and cf. Ep. 43 (H., p. 592, 9).

² Ibid., De bono patientiae (H., p. 405, 19 ff.), § 12.

of torture and penalty, in accordance with the words of our Lord Himself,¹ ‘These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.’”

Before closing this chapter we must call attention to the ‘Acts of Terentius,’ a Greek MS. copy of which was examined by the writer in St Mark’s Library at Venice.² The date of the martyrdom of Terentius and his companions is April 10. We are not told the scene of the occurrence. We read that “Decius, in his anxiety to drag down all men into the gulf of perdition by means of his worship, sent out a decree into the whole of the kingdom that was subject to him, that all who invoked the name of Christ should be compelled to eat of the unholy things, and that those who refused compliance should be brought before the tribunal. The impious decree was forwarded to Fortunatianus,³ who was governor in Africa, and with the arrival of the edict in his province he received the imperial letter. Then he took his seat on the tribune, and gave orders that the

¹ St John xvi. 33.

² Greek MSS. ccclix., *Vita Sanctorum*, March and April.

³ We have no other indication of the name of the proconsul of Africa.

people of the city should be gathered before him. The Christians were brought into his presence, and he said, ‘Sacrifice to the gods: if ye refuse, ye shall die miserably.’ At the same time he gave orders that the implements of torture should be set in the midst. Growing angry at the continued refusal of the Christians, he ordered that they should be stripped and brought into the temple. . . . Then said Fortunatianus, ‘Sacrifice to the great Heracles.’ But they persistently refused; therefore, maddened with rage, he ordered that Terentius and Maximus the African and Pompeius should be cast into the inner ward and guarded with all care. Then Zeno, Alexander, and Theodorus, with a number of friends, were brought before him to the tribune, and the governor, saying, ‘I am compelled to fulfil the behest of the *Invicti Augusti*,’ ordered them to be beaten with rough thongs and wands. They were beaten till they exhausted thirty centurions, and by that time all the available scourges were destroyed.” Here ends the only part of the record which is of any historical value; but in the summary which we have given we find numerous details which are evidently drawn from a genuine source: the season of the year also corresponds accurately with that at which the proconsul held his exami-

nation in Africa. Nevertheless, there is not sufficient positive evidence in the record to justify us in basing any conclusions upon it.

The return of Cyprian to Carthage in April 251 is a suitable point at which to close our present survey. His personality will reappear in the next chapter, and again in the short discussion of the reign of Gallus. Although a large proportion of his flock fell away, yet we cannot feel that he was in any way responsible for their apostasy ; whereas, on the other hand, he was a constant factor in the life of the struggling Church, and there can be but few candid students of this period who will not feel that to his firmness and judgment is largely due the fact that the Church in the West recovered its earlier discipline after the persecution, and renewed the vitality which had suffered so severe a shock.

APPENDIX.

THE *LIBELLUS*.

THE present is a suitable opportunity for a brief discussion of the *libelli*, of which we read so much in Cyprian, as, in spite of the curious fact that the only two copies we possess of such documents were found in Egypt, we shall, so far as the Decian persecution is concerned, hear no more about them after leaving Rome and proconsular Africa. We give the text of both, but as they resemble one another closely, it will suffice to give the translation of one of them—viz., that in the Brugsch collection at Berlin. It was discovered in the Faioum in 1893, and was reproduced in facsimile by Krebs (cf. Note 2).

I.—*LIBELLUS IN THE BRUGSCH COLLECTION.*

τοις επι των θυσιων ηρη-
μενοις κω(μης) αλεξ(ανδρου) νησου
παρα αυρηλ(ιου) διογενον(ς) σατα-
βουτος απο κω(μης) αλεξανδ(ρου)
 5 *νησου ως Λοβ ουλ(η)*
οφρυ δεξ(ια) και αει

- θυων τοις θεοις διετε-
λεσα και νυν επι πα-
ρουσιν υμειν κατα
 10 τα προστετατα[γμε]
να εθυσα [κα]ι επ[...]
[...] . ι των ι[ε]ρειων[...]
σαμην και αξιω ν[μας]
υποσημιωσασθαι
 15 διευτυχειται
αυρηλ[ιος] [δι]ογενης επιδ[ε(δωκα)]
αυρη(λιος) σ....ρ....[...]
θυοντα μυσ[...]
...νωνος σεσ(ημειωμαι)
 20 [Λα] αυτοκρατορο[σ] και[σαρος]
[γα]ιου μεσσιου κ[ο]ιν[του]
[τρ]αι[ανον] [δε]κιου ευσ[εβους]
[ε]υτ[υχοντα] σε[β]α[σ]τον
επ[ειφ] β

II.—*LIBELLUS IN THE ARCHDUKE RAINER'S COLLECTION.*

This *libellus* is very much the same as I., except for the necessary changes where the personal particulars are inserted:—

τοις επι των θυσιων ηρημενοις
κωμης φιλαδελφιας
παρα αυρηλιων συρου και πασβειου του
αδελφου και δημητριας και σαραπιαδος
γυναικων [η]μων εξωπυλειτων
αει θυον[τες] τοις θεοις διετελε-

σαμεν και ννυ επι παροντων υμων
κατα τα προσταχθεντα και εσπισαμεν
και [τω]ν ι[ερειων] ε[γενσαμεθα και]
[αξιουμεν υμας υποσημειω]
σασθαι ημιν διειτ[υχειτε]
αυρηλ συρος και πασβης επιδεδωκ
ισιδωρος εγρ | ν αυτ αγρ |

TRANSLATION OF I.

“To those who have been elected to preside over the sacrifices in the village of Alexander’s Island [comes this petition] from Aurelius Diogenes, son of Satabus, of the village of Alexander’s Island, aged seventy-two, with a scar on his right eyebrow. I have always sacrificed to the gods, and now in your presence, and according to the terms of the edict, I have sacrificed and [poured libations?¹] and [tasted] the sacrificial victims, and I ask you to append your signature. Farewell. Presented by Aurelius Diogenes.” Then follow three lines of a signature in a different hand, which is doubtless the attestation of the *praeses*. The document closes with the date, and the name of the emperor. It is impossible to say whether this is the same kind of *libellus* as that referred to in Cyprian’s writings; but it so thoroughly resembles the document which Cyprian’s words would lead us to expect, that we are prepared to accept it as solving a problem which

¹ Harnack’s suggested reading, ἔθυσα καὶ ἔσπεισα καὶ τῶν ἱερέων ἐγενσάμην, is confirmed by the *libellus* in the Archduke Rainer’s collection.

could hitherto only be approached tentatively. It has been so carefully annotated by Krebs¹ and Harnack² that it would be difficult to add to what they have said.

The *libellus* was to be obtained from the inferior tribunal constituted by the edict, at a price³ proportionate to the avarice of the presiding magistrate. It was to be obtained in two ways, and was a means whereby a man might avoid an actual compliance with the law. Cyprian writes:⁴ "Seeing there is so great a difference between the people who have sacrificed, what a cruel severity it would be to rank the receiver of a *libellus* with one who has sacrificed, since the former merely says, 'I had read and learnt from my bishop that the servant of God should not sacrifice or worship idols, and therefore to avoid disobedience, when the opportunity was given me of receiving a *libellus*, which I could never have obtained had not the chance offered, I went to the magistrate or sent a friend saying that I was a Christian and might not sacrifice or approach the altars of the devil, and so paid to be allowed to escape doing what I ought not.' " What object the *libellus* served, when granted, it is difficult to see, unless we are to imagine that some

¹ Sitzungsbericht der K. P. Ak. der Wiss. Berlin, 1893. November 30, 1007-14.

² Theol. Literatur., January 20, 1894. Dr Harnack describes the second in 'Theolog. Literaturzeitung.' Leipzig, March 17, 1894.

³ Ep. 21 (H., p. 531, 18). Ep. 55 (H., p. 634, 1).

⁴ Ep. 55 (H., p. 633, 17), § 14.

higher body supervised the actions of the lower tribunal ; but if so, how would that body be satisfied with the production of certificates by some professed apostates, whereas others were required to sacrifice ? Further evidence must be brought to light before we can hope to explain the real service done to the possessors by their *libelli*.

That there were two distinct methods of obtaining *libelli* is plain from the words of the Roman presbyters, who write to Cyprian,¹ drawing a definite distinction between those who had shown themselves to be traitors to the truth by proffering for the magistrate's signature *libelli* obtained by means of a false statement (*libellorum professione*) and others who had accepted² them, although they had not been present in person when they were drawn out. This distinction does away with Krebs's theory that *traulere libellum* and *accipere libellum* are parts of the same process, since in the passage cited *profiteri* (= *traulere*) *libellum* is opposed to *accepta facere*. That the first method was put in action by the applicant in person is shown by the emphasis on *ipsos* in l. 23,³ the *libellus* being handed either to himself or a friend ; whereas in the second

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 30 (H., p. 550, 23).

² Hartel rightly reads *accepta* (not *acta*, a likely error) ; otherwise there would be no antithesis.

³ Cf. Peter of Alexandria, Canon v.: *τοῖς δὲ καθυποκριμένοις καὶ μὴ γυμνῶς ἀπογραψαμένοις τὰ πρὸς ἄρνησιν ἀλλὰ διαπαίξασι. . . τὰς τῶν ἔχθρῶν ἐπιβουλὰς — ἣτοι ὡς χειρογραφήσαντες. χειρογράφειν* would refer to those who presented the *libelli* *ἀπογράφεσθαι* to the magistrates.

case the apostate (or his friend) was merely a passive recipient,¹ the *libellus* emanating from the magistrate, who might never even see the person to whom he was granting indulgence.²

A step still more criminal than the mere acceptance of a *libellus* was for a man to allow or cause to be read in public a declaration to the intent that he had sacrificed: this was done by Martialis, a Spanish bishop, the procedure being called *acta publice habere*, or *facere*. Basilides and Martialis were both defiled by the possession of *libelli*, but the latter added to this crime by his action before the ducenary procurator, when he avouched by public profession his acquiescence in idolatry and his rejection of Christ.³ The Roman presbyters elsewhere⁴ write: "He is not free from guilt who gave instructions for the preparation of a *libellus*, nor is he free from blame by whose permission public notice was given of his guilty act, even although he had never performed it." *Acta facere* thus means more than would be admitted by Mosheim,⁵ who says it is the same as *libellum profiteri*.

Cyprian gives it as his opinion that the *libellaticus* has sinned involuntarily, and has done so thinking that the omission of actual compliance was sufficient.⁶

¹ Ep. 55 (H., p. 633, 16, 19).

² Hefele's division into five groups (in Wetzer and Welte's 'Kirchen-Lexicon') is too elaborate. They may be reduced to our two, if, as seems probable, the reading in Aug., De Bapt. adv. Don., Lib. 4, 6, is *thurificatos*, not *thurificatueros*.

³ Ep. 67 (H., p. 740, 21).

⁴ Ep. 30 (H., p. 551, 7).

⁵ Mosheim, *De rebus Christ. ante Const. Mag.*, i. 62.

⁶ Ep. 55 (H., p. 644, 8).

Elsewhere¹ his words point to the idea that the *libellaticus* had done violence to his conscience no less than one who had actually sacrificed. Although Cyprian warns Antonianus against thinking that a *libellaticus* and a *sacrificatus* are on the same plane,² yet the Roman confessors say that to profess to have rejected Christianity is as bad as to approach the altar to sacrifice, and that to give orders for the preparation of a *libellus* is the same as to be present in person.³ *Libelli facinus*⁴ and *libello maculari*⁵ are common expressions.⁶

¹ Ep. 20 (H., p. 528, 1); De lapsis, § 27 (H., p. 256, 24).

² Ep. 55 (H., p. 633, 2).

³ Ep. 30 (H., p. 551, 1).

⁴ De lapsis (H., p. 257, 21), § 28.

⁵ Ep. 67 (H., p. 740, 11).

⁶ On the subject of *libelli*, cf. Appendix B in Archbishop Benson's Cyprian, pp. 541-544.

CHAPTER VIII.

PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE "LAPSI."

"LIBELLI PACIS"—CYPRIAN, THE CHAMPION OF EPISCOPACY—HIS NATURAL TENDENCY TO SEVERITY—THE "LIBELLUS" NOT ROMAN—DIFFICULTIES WITH UNTAUGHT CONFESSORS—PRESBYTERIAN AGGRESSION—A FACTION STIRS UP THE "LAPSI"—AND THE CONFESSORS—LUCIANUS—THREE LETTERS RESPECTING "LIBELLI"—A CONCESSION — CYPRIAN EXPLAINS HIS POSITION TO ROME—THE CONFESSORS GRANT GENERAL RESTORATION—THE "LAPSI" TURBULENT—A COUNCIL IS NECESSARY—TWO PARTIES OF "LAPSI"; THE BOLD, AND THE PATIENT—THE FOUR PRESBYTERS—NOVATUS—FELICISSIMUS—NOVATUS MAKES FELICISSIMUS HIS DEACON—THEIR FACTION EXCOMMUNICATED—NOVATUS GOES TO ROME—HE FINDS NOVATIAN—HE CHANGES HIS OPINIONS AND WINS OVER THE CONFESSORS—THEY OPPOSE CORNELIUS, THE NEW BISHOP—NOVATIAN MADE BISHOP—SENIS ENVOYS TO CARTHAGE—UNCERTAINTY ABOUT CORNELIUS—RUMOURS RESPECTING NOVATIAN—HIS CHARACTER—HIS POSITION—MISTAKE OF CORNELIUS—SECOND DEPUTATION FROM NOVATIAN TO CARTHAGE—THE CONFESSORS RETURN TO THE CHURCH—THE ROMAN SYNOD—THE AFRICAN SYNOD—ITS DECISIONS — LAPSED CLERGY — NOVATIAN CONDEMNED—SECOND COUNCIL, MAY 252—FORTUNATUS MADE BISHOP—THE FUTURE OF NOVATIANISM.

NOTE, ON THE RIGHTS OF MARTYRS.

THE proconsul had not long been occupied in the work of trying the confessors who had stood firm

on their first arraignment, when the question of the restitution of the *lapsi* forced itself on the attention of the Church. The many persons of this class who had sacrificed, and proved to the satisfaction of the magistrates that they were good heathens, were now at liberty to besiege the prison-doors, and work upon the sympathy, sometimes the self-exaltation, of the confessors, entreating that out of the vast treasures of merit which they had amassed by their glorious confession they would grant a small portion to them in order that they might regain the communion with the Church, the right of which they had so recklessly flung away. The question of the terms on which these *lapsi* might be readmitted to the Church confronted the Bishop of Carthage first of all, and the situation was aggravated by the impulsive nature of his undisciplined African flock. It was only when the first causes of the struggle had been obscured, and the passions of the opposing factions had passed all bounds, that the scene widened and an entirely new phase of the difficulty appeared, which involved not only the African provincials but Rome itself, the seat of order.

We shall the better understand the difficulty which faced Cyprian, if we bear in mind the fact

that it was his continual aim to champion the power of the bishops as opposed to the claims of the presbyters. As the visible centre and depositary of the Church's life, the bishop had a right to claim that to him should be referred all questions of binding and loosing upon earth, without exception. We shall discover that the party of the presbyters in Carthage was very strong, and that, from the day when it opposed the election to the episcopate of the neophyte Cyprian, until the time that it laid claim to the power of granting restoration to the lapsed without the intervention of the bishop, it proved a source of constant anxiety. On this occasion it almost succeeded in estranging from the Catholic Church—and thereby nullifying the virtue of their confession—those martyrs and confessors who were not sufficiently well instructed in the faith to discriminate between order and disorder. There was great danger that these men, who were often illiterate,¹ might be uplifted beyond measure by the sudden celebrity they had attained; the few

¹ In Ep. 27 we read that Lucianus wrote *libelli pacis* in the name of Aurelius, because Aurelius could not write. Again (543, 9), Lucianus is called "circa intelligentiam domiuicæ lectionis minime peritus." A *libellus pacis* was properly a letter of recommendation from a confessor to the bishop, asking that a particular *lapsus* might be restored to communion.

weeks of their confession, they learned, had been sufficient to confer on them the right of restoring the lapsed to communion. In their brotherly love or compassion it was natural that, not realising the probable issue of their action, they should scatter broadcast letters of recommendation; farther, when their petitioners came to them with caressing words and feigned humility in the presence of their great exploits, was it likely that men of their stamp would make searching inquiries into the fitness of each candidate and of his friends, or be over-careful in inscribing the names of those to whom they gave their certificates? That their sudden rise in popular estimation had a bad influence on some of the confessors, is plain from the words of Cyprian, who finds it necessary to rebuke them for their shameless licence, and their proneness to strife.¹

Cyprian was determined to enforce his own views on the matter at issue. Certificates of recommendation signed by confessors should not be allowed to supersede the ordinary demand for penitence. Again, the bishop must possess the right of veto in each case. Cyprian refused to be merely a machine attaching an obedient

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 13 (H., p. 507, 21).

signature to each certificate as it was presented to him. He had no doubt in his own mind as to the superiority of the priesthood to any dignity that laymen, however holy, might choose to assert among his flock. He retained the austere views of the old school to such an extent that, although he did not refuse to grant readmission to a *lapsus* who showed due penitence and humility for his fall, he would neither be content with an illusory repentance, nor yet with such a subterfuge as for the sorrow of the sinner would substitute the superfluous merit of the saint. Not that he did not himself share the popular superstitious regard for the prerogative of the martyrs, but he had no intention that their reckless liberality should usurp the place due to repentance.

It seems probable that, had it not been for a desire to assimilate the action of the Carthaginian Church to that of the Roman, Cyprian would have followed in the steps of Tertullian, thus finding himself in harmony with Novatian's party, who asserted that a *lapsus* was in the hands of God to pardon or condemn, but that having once fallen away from the body of Christ on earth, he was for ever beyond the reach of man, so far as the visible signs of Church membership were concerned. But a remark in

an early letter of the Roman clergy¹ to those of Carthage indicated their opinion on the subject of such of the *lapsi* as were dangerously ill, and with commendable foresight Cyprian determined to shape his course accordingly. The words he read were these: "If any have fallen into this temptation and are seized with illness, and show repentance for their deeds, and crave for communion with the Church, the hand of mercy should be extended to them."² Although the letter was written in February or March, before any *lapsi* had sought readmission at Carthage, Cyprian was aware of the difficulties respecting them that would inevitably arise, and determined that on this point there should be no friction between the Western Churches.

It is worthy of remark that the Roman clergy do not mention the *libellus pacis* in any of their letters on the subject of readmission, whereas Cyprian never fails to urge the necessity of such a *libellus* for all *lapsi* who hoped for the concession in case of sickness.³ In view of the fact

¹ Ep. 20 (H., p. 528, 25): "Staudum putavi et cum vestra sententia." Cf. also Ep. 14 (H., p. 512, 9). Benson (pp. 99-101) points out that the Roman Church was altogether indebted to Cyprian for its *policy* in dealing with the lapsed.

² Cyprian, Ep. 8 (H., p. 487, 18).

³ Ep. 8, § 3 *init.*; Ep. 30, § 8; Ep. 55, § 5: but for Cyprian and the *libellus* cf. Ep. 19, § 2; Ep. 20, § 3.

that Celerinus writes to Lucianus to ask for “peace” to be given to his two apostate sisters,¹ and of that which we have just noticed—namely, that the Roman Church says nothing of restoring communion in consideration of *libelli*—shall we be far wrong if we assume that the *libelli pacis* did not appear at all on the north of the Mediterranean? If this assumption is true, it will help to lead to the conclusion that the Roman Church, in the person of its confessors, was mentally more advanced and more rationally conducted than its younger sister in Africa.

Fully realising the difficulty which was likely to arise from the glorification of these (in many cases) uneducated persons, Cyprian writes to his clergy:² “Let the wants of the confessors be diligently supplied, provided they hear from you and learn what, according to the teaching of Holy Scripture, Church discipline demands—namely, that they must be humble, self-controlled, and quiet, in order to maintain the honour of their name, that those who have proved noble in word should prove no less so in life, that they may show themselves worthy,

¹ Ep. 21, Celerinus Luciano (H., p. 531, 15).

² Ep. 14 (H., p. 511 ff.)

by a constant service of God, to arrive at the crown of glory as the consummation of their noble actions."

In Ep. 14 we hear for the first time of the question of readmission. Four presbyters, who had already proved very troublesome to Cyprian, wrote to ask his opinion on the subject. He answered that he could give no decision until peace had been restored to the Church and he had met his clergy, and that, prior to the conclusion of some settlement, the *lapsi* must wait patiently. This was written probably in the month of June. The four presbyters now determined upon a course of action which should undermine the power so studiously vindicated and so carefully fostered by the bishop. The most powerful men in the Church in its present unsettled condition were the victorious confessors, while the greater number of Church members were those now reckoned as *lapsi*. Their policy, therefore, was obviously to win over both these parties to their interest, and thereby isolate the bishop. The ordinary course pursued in the readmission of a penitent¹ to the Church in cases of minor misdemeanour involved the co-operation of the bishop: their plan was to do

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 16 (H., p. 518, 19).

without him. Cyprian had secreted himself; he was known to be rigorously inclined towards the *lapsi*;¹ the presbyters would take the matter into their own hands. Cyprian tells us the story himself:² “They” (*i.e.*, the faction headed by Felicissimus, the deacon of Novatus, one of the party) “incited certain of the confessors to dissent from their bishop, and to disobey the commands of the Lord by refusing a faithful and quiet adherence to Church discipline, that they might prevent them from so walking as to preserve untarnished the glory of their confession. Nor was it enough to pervert the minds of certain of the confessors, and to endeavour to arm a part of our shattered society against the episcopal authority ordained of God, but they must needs seek by means of the poison of their deceit the destruction of the *lapsi* as well, leading away from the salve they need the men who are bleeding after the struggle, and have not the strength to take wiser counsel. They call upon them to forsake their prayers, wherewith at last they may appease the anger of God, and, with a rashness that brings death in its train, to accept a specious peace that is but a lie.”

¹ Ep. 59 (H., p. 680, 10).

² Ep. 43 (H., p. 591, 18 ff.)

The immediate result of this seditious behaviour was that long before the exiles had thought of returning to the city,¹ the *lapsi* were clamouring at the doors of the Church, and were beguiling the confessors by means of flattering words and importunate prayers² into granting, without distinction and without examination of individual cases, countless *libelli pacis* every day. Cyprian even hints that illicit bargaining was carried on for blank certificates, which were afterwards filled in by the buyers.³

The most serious offender was Lucianus, of whom Cyprian writes to the Roman clergy⁴ (the date being probably June 250, as may be seen by a comparison of this letter with that from Lucianus to Celerinus, Ep. 22): "Our brother Lucianus, who is himself one of the confessors, a man of burning zeal and strong character, although little versed in the Word of God, has, on his own authority and without precedent, taken upon himself to distribute broadcast certificates in his own handwriting,⁵ made out in the name of Paulus, whereas the martyr Map-

¹ Ep. 19 (H., p. 526, 9 ff.) ² Ep. 20 (H. p. 528, 1 ff.)

³ Ep. 15 (H., p. 515, 22). ⁴ Ep. 27 (H., p. 540, 14).

⁵ Ep. 22, Lucianus Celerino (H., p. 534, § 2). Paulus instructed Lucianus to give the certificates.

palicus, careful and modest man that he is, with due thought for law and order, wrote no letter in disobedience to the Gospel, but, through his family affection only, was induced to give instructions for the readmission of his mother and sister, who had lapsed; while Saturninus, who is still in prison after the torture, has sent out no letter of the kind at all. Further, Lucianus distributed his *libelli* in the name of Paulus, not only when the latter was yet in prison, but even when he was dead, saying that Paulus had so instructed him, but forgetting that he ought to obey the Lord rather than his fellow-servant.¹ Again, many *libelli* were distributed in the name of Aurelius, a youth who was tortured, but were written by Lucianus, because Aurelius could not write."

It was in view of this difficulty, and with the desire at once of checking the number and of securing the formal correctness of the *libelli*, that Cyprian says² that he wrote the group of three letters (Epp. 15-17) to the Carthaginian

¹ The disobedience here referred to Cyprian explains later in the same letter (543, 11): "Cum Dominus dixerit in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti gentes tingui et in baptismo præterita peccata dimitti, hic . . . mandat pacem dari et peccata dimitti in Pauli nomine."

² Ep. 27 (H., p. 541, 16-18).

martyrs and confessors, his clergy, and the Carthaginian Church at large. These are the last three of the thirteen letters which Cyprian copied and sent to the Roman clergy with an earlier letter, Ep. 20.

It would seem that the martyrs and confessors had before this shown due submission to the bishop by writing him a private letter, in which they requested him to examine their petitions, as soon as peace should be restored:¹ so far Cyprian has no cause for blame. What he wishes to have changed is the manner of filling up the *libelli*,² which must henceforth be given only to specified individuals, after due examination of each case, and must state that the bishop's ratification is required. "I hear," he writes, "that some have their *libelli* made out in such a way as to read, 'Let him have communion, and his friends also,' a thing which the martyrs never did before, with the result that the obscure wording of the petition causes considerable ill-feeling against us. 'He, and his friends also,' is a wide expression, and we shall have twenty or thirty, or even more, presenting themselves, and avouching they are the relations, and connections, and

¹ Ep. 15 (H., p. 514, 5). Cf. 16, § 3; 17, § 1.

² Ep. 15 (H., p. 516, § 4).

freedmen and servants of the receiver of the certificate.”¹

To the clergy he writes in Ep. 16: “We must not blame those who are not instructed in the law of Holy Scripture, but those who are over them and do not counsel the [fallen] brethren that they should in all cases act under the guidance of their clergy, with the fear of God before their eyes, and with a regard to the duties of obedience which that fear imposes. For the clergy expose the blessed martyrs to prejudice, and engage the servants of God in a strife with the priest [*i.e.*, the bishop²] of God, so that, whereas the martyrs, remembering my position, wrote me a letter asking for their petitions to be looked into and ‘peace’ to be given only when our mother, the Church, in the mercy of God shall have recovered tranquillity, and the protecting hand of Providence have restored me to the flock, these factious clergy leave out of sight

¹ It is to this that Cyprian refers in his letter to the Roman clergy, Ep. 20 (H., p. 528, 1-7).

² Cf. Pontianus, *Vita Cypr.*, § 5: “Ad officium sacerdotii et episcopatus gradum.” Ep. 17 (H., p. 522, 4): “Nec episcopo honorem sacerdotii sui et cathedrae reservantes.” Ep. 43 (H., p. 591, 24): “Adversus sacerdotium Dei portionem . . . fraternitatis armare.” On the meaning of *sacerdos* in Cyprian’s writings, cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 33, note.

the honour done me by the martyrs and confessors. Without regard for the law of God and the obedience which the confessors commanded to be observed (before the fear of persecution is over, before I have returned, even before the martyrs have died), they hold communion with the *lapsi*, offer the Eucharist on their behalf and grant them communion, at a time when, if even the martyrs, in the enthusiasm of their glory, looked away from the Word of God and desired somewhat contrary to His will, they ought to be admonished by the clergy, as was always the case in time past."

From this we see that the malcontents opposed to Cyprian were making way in Carthage: they were extending communion regularly to the *lapsi*, and thus convincing the confessors that the signature of a confessor was quite sufficient without that of the bishop. In his letter to the confessors and martyrs¹ Cyprian expresses his grief that the disobedient presbyters, in defiance of God, of himself, and of the dictum of the martyrs, are defiling the holy body of the Lord, by giving the sacred elements to the *lapsi* before they have done penance, before they have made confession of their grievous sin, and before the bishop and the clergy

¹ Ep. 15 (H., p. 514, 5 ff.)

have laid their hands upon them. Later, he says¹ that he can hide his feelings when his office is insulted, but not so when any of his clergy lead the brethren astray: they curry favour with the *lapsi*, although they have no power to restore them, and are a hindrance to them. The *lapsi* might be doing true penance, and with their prayers and works be reconciling themselves with their merciful Father, but instead they are being led into a fall the more grievous by reason of their present exaltation. Therefore he calls upon the Church² to guide the *lapsi* with gentle counsels according to the will of God. "Let them hear," he writes, "in patience my advice, let them wait for me to come back, when a council shall be called and their petitions examined."

Of the presbyters³ who persisted in extending communion to the *lapsi*, Cyprian writes: "With regard to those headstrong and contentious presbyters among you, who neither regard man nor fear God, inasmuch as they have with full knowledge persevered in their course of disobedience, I will put in force the admonition which the

¹ Ep. 16 (H., p. 517, 17).

² Ep. 17 (H., p. 522), § 3 *passim*. Cf. Ep. 15, § 2 (H., p. 514).

³ Ep. 16 (H., p. 520, § 4).

Lord commands me to employ, and forbid them to offer sacrifice until such time as they shall appear before the confessors and the whole Church to answer for themselves in my court, when with the permission of God I have been restored to my flock." He is able to tell the Roman Church that his commands have been obeyed,¹ although he finds it necessary again² to enforce them on his clergy somewhat later in much the same terms. It was in obedience to these orders that, among others, Gaius of Dida was excommunicated with his deacon.³

This group of three letters of advice was followed by one containing a concession,⁴ which was drawn from Cyprian by the tension of the situation. He realised the difficulties of the presbyters who were on his side, and decided to protect them against the violence of the *lapsi*.⁵ Summer was approaching, when sickness and death might be expected, but the signs of the times warned him that his presence in Carthage would still be undesirable.

He adopted what, as we have seen (cf. note 1, p. 165), was the plan of the Roman clergy, and

¹ Ep. 20 (H., p. 528, 7-11).

² Ep. 34 (H., p. 570, 9-13).

³ Ep. 34 (H., p. 568, 11 ff.)

⁴ Ep. 18, *passim*.

⁵ Ep. 20 (H., p. 528, 14).

decided that if any *lapsus*, who possessed a *libellus pacis*, was seized with a dangerous illness, and seemed to be at the point of death, a presbyter (or, in the absence of a presbyter, a deacon) might hear his confession, and, laying his hand on his head, might suffer him to meet his God with the peace which the martyrs desired for him. Those who had no *libellus* must trust¹ to the mercy of God, and wait for the return of more peaceful times, when a council would be held. If the *lapsi* were really eager to return to full communion, the remedy lay in their own hands: the persecution was still raging, let them annul their earlier unfaithfulness by a bold confession.² Cyprian was glad to notice, that notwithstanding the impetuous eagerness of some of the *lapsi*, a real impression was being produced on the minds of many others by the assiduous care of the faithful clergy, whom at the beginning of this letter he congratulates on their zealous adherence to their duty.

With a view to vindicating his reputation in the eyes of the Roman clergy, Cyprian, as we have already mentioned, despatched to Rome³

¹ Ep. 19 (the second to the Roman clergy) (H., p. 526, 1).

² Ep. 25. This is the gist of the letter to Caldonius.

³ Ep. 20 (H., p. 527, 16).

copies of the five letters (Epp. 15-19) which he had sent to his flock, with eight others written at various times within the last six months. These were enclosed in a letter written probably early in July, and sent from his retreat by the bearer who took Epp. 18, 19 to Carthage. In this letter (Ep. 20) he explains his general position, and gives the Roman clergy a hint of the difficulties at Carthage, suggesting that there was at work a factious spirit to which the unrest might be attributed.¹

The same five epistles Cyprian sent round to various bishops,² one of whom was Caldonius. The latter had occasion to seek the advice of Cyprian, and with his answer the bishop sent copies of Epp. 15-19, adding that they had given satisfaction to those who had already seen them, for they had written back to signify their approval of the contents.

Rejoicing in the thought that his brother bishops were at one with himself,³ Cyprian was startled to receive a communication from the confessor Lucianus,⁴ who in reply to his mild

¹ Ep. 21 (H., p. 528, 14). ² Ep. 25 (H., p. 538, 17).

³ Ep. 25 (H., p. 538, 17-20) and Ep. 26 (H., p. 539, 15).

⁴ Ep. 23. Cf. Ep. 26, to his clergy (p. 539, 7), and also Ep. 27, to the Roman clergy (p. 541, 18).

letter of advice struck a note of defiance for which the disciplinarian was unprepared. It grieved him that, after writing to the confessors of the great need of humility and fear¹ in such as were to be examples to others, he should receive in the name of their whole band a letter instructing him, the bishop, to extend peace to all whom the martyrs wished, and to advise his colleagues to do the same. The note closes with an abrupt sentence, which implies that the confessors hope he will be too prudent to disregard their wishes. This letter, following closely upon Cyprian's concession, caused him bitter disappointment: he could see more clearly than ever that there was a powerful party arrayed against him, but he felt that the matter did not rest with the Carthaginian confessors to decide. The position was an unpleasant one, but he had the moral support of Roman opinion. He had seen the recent letter from the Roman clergy to those at Carthage, and one from the Roman confessors to their African brethren, and was filled with joy at the well-disciplined spirit which they evinced.² Nevertheless, he could not forget that for the

¹ Ep. 13 (H., p. 506, 1-5) and Ep. 18.

² Ep. 27 (H., p. 544, § 4). Neither of these Roman letters are extant.

moment he was in a most invidious situation; since, with the want of logical perception which is so common in certain classes, the *lapsi* could not understand why the clergy should take the cases of others into consideration, and leave their own undecided.¹ "In my own province," he writes² to the Roman clergy, "there are several towns where the clergy have been besieged by the *lapsi*, who compelled them to confirm to them on the spot the 'peace' which they declared the martyrs and confessors had given them: the clergy who had not sufficient courage or faith to resist were terrified into compliance. In Carthage also there are some unruly people (whom we could only with difficulty keep in order in time past, and barely managed to persuade to wait until my return), who have been inflamed by this note from the confessors and have reiterated their demands for communion." He sent to the Roman clergy (in addition to the thirteen letters which accompanied Ep. 20) copies of Ep. 23 (the confessors' letter), the letter of Caldonus and its answer (Epp. 24, 25), and the correspondence between Celerinus and Lucianus (Ep. 21, 22), which had come into his hands since he had written Ep. 20.

¹ Ep. 27 (H., p. 542, 8).

² Ep. 27 (H., p. 542, 12 ff.)

In return for the kindness which prompted the confessors at Rome to write to those at Carthage the letter which had given such strong moral support to Cyprian, he wrote back Ep. 28, congratulating them on their robust faith and firm adherence to discipline. "Herein lies," he writes,¹ "the true confession of God, the true witness for Christ, that a man keep his lips true in all cases and steadfast, rather than that he should by the grace of God become a martyr, and then endeavour to overthrow the commands of God." The bishop sent also to his own clergy copies of Epp. 27 and 28, which he had addressed to the clergy and the confessors respectively of the Roman Church.²

Ep. 30 is the answer of the Roman clergy to Ep. 27. They express themselves as being entirely in accord with Cyprian on the question of discipline, and scout the idea that Rome might forget her pristine vigour. They realise that the question of the readmission of the *lapsi* is one which affects the whole Church;³ it cannot be settled by a handful of provincial confessors: when peace has been restored, and the Church

¹ Ep. 28 (H., p. 546, 14 ff.)

² Ep. 29, with which he forwards the copies.

³ Ep. 30 (H., p. 553, 18). Cf. Ep. 19 (H., p. 526, 1).

has time to breathe freely again, a council must be held of bishops, priests, and deacons, with representatives of the faithful laity.¹ Till then it is the duty of all in the Church to pray that the *lapsi* may be kept patient and penitent,—knocking at the door of the Church, but not assailing it with force. Until that time the Roman Church would take no fresh action, except to admit to communion with all precaution such of the *lapsi* as were drawing near to death and exhibited the signs of true penitence.

Cyprian's confidence in the moral strength of his position was further increased by the receipt of Ep. 31 from the Roman confessors, who felt that they might return his compliment, and stated that they were thoroughly in accord with him in his attitude towards the *lapsi*. At the close of their letter they asked somewhat pertinently, “What is the value of confession, if one who abandons his faith is permitted to return to communion without delay, as though nothing had ever happened to interrupt his Christian life?”

¹ Cyprian's form of government was a constitutional monarchy. He wished the clergy to discuss Church measures, which either had been initiated by him or else would require his ratification. Cf. Ep. 34 (H., p. 570, 17).

In order that his position might be the better understood by all his subordinates, Cyprian sent to his clergy¹ copies of his entire correspondence with the Roman Church, which he desired might be read in public, and held ready for any who wished to copy them.

The results of Cyprian's consistent policy did not long remain in doubt. Two letters² which he received about the month of August showed that the *lapsi* were now ranged in two camps. The one party wrote to Cyprian in the name of the Church,³ demanding the communion⁴ which they said Paulus had granted them—for the insubordination hitherto prevailing⁵ in other towns now appeared at Carthage, and raised its head against Cyprian himself.⁶ In this body were to be found the followers of Cyprian's old opponents among the presbyters. The other party refused to be carried away by the persuasions of these agitators, and wrote Cyprian a letter in very humble terms, assuring him that they would prefer to wait for "peace" until he himself could return to bestow it. He was so much gratified by this

¹ Ep. 32.

² Ep. 33 (H., p. 566, 13) and Ep. 33 (H., p. 567, 9).

³ Ep. 33 (H., p. 566, 13).

⁴ Ep. 35 (H., p. 571, 10).

⁵ Ep. 27 (H., p. 542, 12 ff.)

⁶ Ep. 35 (H., p. 571, 14, and 572, 14).

letter that he desired to know the names of the senders, in order to follow up the epistle to the *lapsi* in general by a second and special one, discussing their particular case.¹ As the autumn of 250 drew near, Cyprian received a further token of confidence from the Roman clergy. They saw the importance of the master-stroke of policy, which had enlisted confessors and *lapsi* alike on the side of the party of agitation, flattering the pride of the former while it raised the hopes of the latter. The danger, however, was one of sudden growth:² if time were allowed to do its work, the dissatisfaction would pass away, provided that the influence could be counteracted of those who were offering³ sweet draughts of their own in place of the wormwood of Cyprian, and speedy recovery instead of the sole but laborious road to health. It was obvious that the petulance displayed by both the confessors and the *lapsi* was not of natural growth, but was fostered from without.⁴

The rebellion of the party of the aggrieved presbyters against Cyprian's decision as to the

¹ Ep. 33, § 2 *passim* (H., p. 567).

² Ep. 36, § 3 *init.* (H., p. 574). ³ Ep. 34 (H., p. 569, 16).

⁴ Ep. 51 (H., p. 681, 1). Cyprian gives us to understand that terrorism was actually employed by the *lapsi* to extort grants of peace from the jaded confessors.

lapsi was but a surface indication of an evil—recognised by Cyprian and his friends at Rome—whose roots extended widely underground, ready to make their appearance as soon as opportunity offered. The winter of 250 was at hand, and the confessors were being released from prison, with the result that many brethren were in distress, and those who were occupied in small businesses could not re-establish themselves without extraneous assistance.¹ With his usual care for his flock, Cyprian decided to send a commission to inquire into the circumstances of those who applied for aid, and to make grants to deserving cases from the Church funds. Here sedition found another opportunity to challenge the claims of what seemed episcopal assumption.

In the early part of this chapter we noticed that a party of four presbyters took the lead in the opposition to Cyprian: their names were Donatus, Fortunatus, Gordius, and Novatus.²

These were four out of the five presbyters, of whom Cyprian writes³ that they were as injurious to the Church as the five local magnates who were chosen to constitute the preliminary court

¹ Ep. 41 (H., p. 587, 13 ff.) ² Ep. 14 (H., p. 512, 16, 17).

³ Ep. 43 (H., p. 592, 9-13). Cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 76, note.

for the trial of Christians. In time their factious conduct brought down upon them a richly deserved sentence of excommunication from the African bishops.¹ These five² it was who, joined with Felicissimus, had invented the new system of restoration to the Church: they had advised the fallen to ignore the bishops, and to refuse to wait for the council which had been promised by the authorities of the Western Churches, thus striking a blow at all Church discipline. We should remember that, in accordance with Cyprian's orders, these presbyters had been excommunicated by the law-abiding adherents of the bishop, but it is probable that the excommunication had no effect on the *lapsi* to whom they appealed,³ and who were not in a position to recognise the difference between episcopal and presbyteral claims. It was from Novatus and Felicissimus that the chief difficulty proceeded: they played the leading part in the schism at Carthage. In estimating the actions and characters of these firebrands, we labour under a great disadvantage: the whole history

¹ Ep. 59 (H., p. 676, 5, 8).

² Ep. 43 (H., p. 592, 13). We do not know who the fifth presbyter was: it could not have been Augendus (Ep. 41, H., p. 589, 6), because he was only a deacon.

³ Ep. 41 (H., p. 589, 10-12).

is recorded by an opponent, whom we know to be fighting with particular zeal for his own position. Felicissimus and Novatus may have been quite as bad as they are represented, but, on the other hand, we must not forget that Cyprian was a rhetorician, and that this fact insensibly coloured his utterances with a deeper tinge than historic accuracy would warrant. With this caution, we may give Cyprian's accusations: "Novatus¹ has defrauded wards, cheated widows, and robbed the Church of its funds; and for these acts of iniquity his victims are crying for vengeance. His father died in the streets of hunger, and he never even buried him. He kicked his wife when with child, and caused her to miscarry. Such are the crimes of which he is guilty." Again:² "Novatus has been always factious, arrogant, and stubborn; his avarice is unbounded, his greed insatiable. He has ever been in bad repute with the bishops; he has been publicly condemned as a heretic and a traitor; his heart is set on deceit, his tongue loves to fawn and flatter; he is a firebrand of sedition, a rock whereon the faithful make shipwreck, an enemy to all peace." Of Felicissimus,

¹ Ep. 52 (H., p. 619, 1 ff.)

² Ep. 52 (H., p. 617, 19 ff.)

the standard-bearer of schism,¹ he writes: “He was expelled from our society,² lest the author of schism and discord, the thief of money deposited with him, the ravisher of maidens, the breaker-up of homes, should with his infamous presence and the contagion of his foulness pollute the spotless bride of Christ.”

Novatus, whom Cyprian regarded as the prime mover³ in all the discord we have been discussing, had at some time in 250 acted upon his own principle of independence, and appointed Felicissimus his deacon,⁴ without the bishop’s permission. Cyprian does not attempt to deny the validity of the orders of Felicissimus: this, coupled with the fact that no one at Carthage would even at such a time of disturbance have recognised presbyterian ordination,⁵ shows that he was regularly ordained, and that Novatus—as at Rome, where he pressed upon Novatian the expediency of his being consecrated bishop—

¹ Ep. 59 (H., p. 676, 9). ² Ep. 59 (H., p. 666, 20).

³ Ep. 52 (H., p. 618, 8-11). ⁴ Ep. 52 (H., p. 618, 11 ff.)

⁵ Neander (i. 303) and Ritschl (Cypr. von Carth., 173 f.) try to show that Felicissimus was not episcopally ordained; but if we look at Ep. 52 (H., p. 618, 13) we shall see that Novatus only “*constituit*” Felicissimus as his deacon. Notice also the parallel between his action at Rome and Carthage, p. 618, 18: “Qui istic adversus ecclesiam diaconum *fecerat*, illic episcopum fecit.”

played the part of agent, and secured the co-operation of some bishop, possibly a heretic. Felicissimus, who had doubtless been instructed to assert parochial independence, met the bishop's commission¹ of visitation with contumely, and threatened that he would refuse the rites of the Church in the hour of death² to any who availed themselves of the aid they offered. Only a few preferred the dubious offices of Felicissimus to the regular assistance of the Church,³ and Cyprian ordered that he and Augendus, another deacon who had allied himself with the faction of disorder, and all who adhered to them, should be held *ipso facto* excommunicated.⁴ This sentence was duly carried out,⁵ and was not without its effect.

Novatus, for whom the persecution had come at a most opportune moment, saving him from

¹ Ep. 41 (H., p. 588, 2).

² Ep. 41 (H., p. 588, 6 and 17), reading *morte* with Hartel. Cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 112, note 1, in which he explains his adoption of "*in Monte*."

³ Ep. 41, § 2 *init.* It is suggested by Mosheim that Felicissimus based his claim on the rule that only deacons were to be mediums for carrying assistance to the poor.

⁴ Ep. 41 (H., p. 588, 18) and Ep. 43 (H., p. 597, 1-4).

⁵ Ep. 42, from the bishop's commissioners, Caldonius and Herculanus, bishops, and Rogatianus and Numidicus, presbyters.

being put on his trial for his many misdeeds¹, had realised that his best hope lay in prolonging as far as possible the absence of the bishop, and with this object in view, amongst others, he had lent his utmost support to the schism.² But now that Cyprian had signified his intention of returning immediately after Easter, he felt that it would be wiser for him to quit the scene for a time and seek sympathy at Rome, where the Church was still without a bishop. Without delay he took ship for Rome, in company with the excommunicated deacon Augendus, and, on passing to a larger sphere, scattered the seeds of a wider trouble.³

He arrived in Rome⁴ in February 251, and found the field ready for the sower's hand. Peace was within view, the prisons were about to release the surviving confessors, the Church was preparing to elect a bishop. The popular choice had fallen upon Cornelius, a man who had filled honourably various offices in the

¹ Ep. 42 (H., p. 619, 10).

² Ep. 43 (H., p. 591, 5-11). The "conjuratio sua" is the opposition to Cyprian's election.

³ Ep. 52 (H., p. 618, 13, and 16-18).

⁴ Episc. Urb. Cat. (ed. R. A. Lipsius) under "Fabianus". "Eo tempore supervenit Novatus ex Africa et separavit de ecclesia Novatianum et quosdam confessores, postquam Moyses in carcere defunctus est."

Church : moreover, he held loyally the opinions maintained by the Western Churches, and would therefore claim the support of Cyprian. Here was the opportunity for which Novatus was seeking. He had not been long in Rome before he came in contact with Novatian, a leading presbyter, and learned from him that the candidate for the vacant see was too lax in his attitude towards the *lapsi* to satisfy the more austere section of the Church. The confessors, too, had at the end of January lost Moyses,¹ the strongest personality among them, who had succumbed to the severity of the winter. He it was who had led them to accept the decision of their clergy, with which Cyprian found himself in accord, on the question of the prompt restoration of the sick *lapsi*. With the readiness of resource for which Cyprian gave him full credit, Novatus did not hesitate. By his former declarations at Carthage he had shown himself to be far more lax than Cornelius was even suspected of being, and had thereby committed himself, irretrievably it would have seemed, to a policy of general restoration ; but circumstances alter cases, and Novatus found no difficulty in assuming the rôle of a rigorist, and adopting the views of Novatian. He did not

¹ Ep. 55 (H., p. 627, 8).

scruple to recall¹ to the minds of the confessors their words to Cyprian, which had once condemned himself; he could descant on the need of searching discipline to remove the stains which befouled the Church. “Why confess Christ, and endure the horrors of the prison-house, if one who recants stands in no danger of being separated from the faith? Why be bound with chains, if the unfaithful retain the privilege of communion? Why die a martyr’s death, if traitors to their faith are not made to feel the gravity of their sins?” By means of these and like suggestions he worked upon the minds of the confessors, whom on their release² he succeeded in enlisting on the side of Novatian. The accession to the rigorist ranks of these heroes of the Church had the effect of largely increasing the number of their adherents, while many who had hitherto wavered between the two views were finally decided in their choice of a leader by the example of the confessors. Hence when in March 251 Cornelius was declared Bishop of Rome, he found that considerable numbers of his people were

¹ Ep. 31 (H., p. 564, § 8).

² Ep. 54 (H., p. 622, 9). Benson, Cyprian, p. 137, explains his apparent change of policy as based upon his antagonism to “the encroachments of episcopal influence.”

banded together against him, while almost immediately after his elevation¹ he was confronted with a rival claimant to the see, in the person of Novatian,² whom Novatus had induced to allow himself to be consecrated.³ Cyprian writes (Ep. 44) for the first time to the Bishop of Rome — namely, Cornelius — who had doubtless sent letters to Carthage to inform him of his appointment. The Bishop of Carthage, who had heard rumours of the uneasy situation, had sent two fellow-bishops to Rome to ascertain from those who assisted at the consecration of Cornelius the true facts of the case, and to aid, as far as might be, in restoring order.⁴ Before their return two other African bishops⁵ arrived with a satisfactory report, and Cyprian was enabled to treat with fitting coolness the official envoys of Novatian. Giving them to understand that they were in schism and the representatives of a schismatic, he ordered immediately that they should be cou-

¹ Ep. 44 (H., p. 597). Cyprian's envoys had not even returned from Rome with the true account of the ordination of Cornelius, when the messengers of Novatian arrived with the news of his (Novatian's) ordination, bearing his credentials.

² Ep. 45 (H., p. 600, 3-6).

³ Episc. Urb. Cat. (ed. R. A. Lipsius) under "Cornelius": "Sub episcopatu ejus Novatus extra ecclesiam ordinavit Novatianum in urbe Roma."

⁴ Ep. 45 (H., p. 599, 12 ff.)

⁵ Ep. 44 (H., p. 598, 4).

sidered excommunicated.¹ On his refusal to hear their charges against Cornelius, which they protested they could substantiate, they proceeded to a systematic visitation of the neighbourhood, in the hope of securing support for the party and tenets of Novatian.² With the object of refuting the slanders which they were commissioned to publish, Cyprian instructed his clergy to read aloud to their flocks the letters of Cornelius which had reached him, and which were now confirmed by the report of his envoys,³ Caldonius and Fortunatus, as well as portions of the letter from Novatian which his now excommunicated messengers had brought: the text of this letter Cyprian was forced to expurgate, so unfit was the language⁴ employed to be used in connection with the grave office of a bishop.

He tells Cornelius that, while much regretting the delay which had occurred in recognising his elevation to the episcopate, he was compelled to make careful inquiries in order to relieve the

¹ Of this commission of four, Augendus was already excommunicated (Ep. 42), while Maximus, Longinus, and Machæus, whom (Ep. 44, 15) Cyprian ordered to be excommunicated, we read (Ep. 50, § 1) were duly *expulsi*. Thus Novatian's first bid for Carthaginian support was discredited.

² Ep. 44 (H., p. 598, § 3). ³ Ep. 45 (H., p. 600, 6 and 16).

⁴ Ep. 45 (H., p. 602, 1).

minds of his fellow-bishops,¹ who had been disturbed by receiving the letters of Novatian immediately after those of Cornelius, and who desired a thorough investigation of the rival claims.

Cyprian's letter to Antonianus (Ep. 55) was written in order to applaud the course which that bishop had adopted. The envoys of Novatian had, on leaving Carthage, presented their credentials to Antonianus among others; but, although he failed to see wherein lay the heresy of Novatian, and was withal somewhat uneasy about the laxity of his opponents,² he decided to follow the example of Cyprian, and recognise the claims of Cornelius. That general uncertainty prevailed we may gather from the letter of Cyprian to Cornelius, which explains why certain of the churches in his province had, under advice from him and his council, after recognising Cornelius in early letters, addressed later ones to his clergy instead of to him.³

On the other hand, there were several African bishops who joined the party of Novatian, and,

¹ Ep. 49 (H., p. 602, 6). ² Ep. 55 (H., p. 624, 15-20).

³ Ep. 48. Cornelius was evidently annoyed; but Cyprian explains that in so large a province as his, anything was better than confused and divided action. Cf. Benson, *Cyprian*, pp. 132, 133.

to strengthen their hands, these consecrated Maximus, one of the party from Rome, as bishop¹ in the course of the year 251.

At Rome party feeling was running very high, with the result that each side gave publicity to the most discreditable reports about the other, and these found their way into the official letters of commendation which the representatives of each leader carried. From the letter of Cornelius to Fabius, Bishop of Antioch,² we learn that Novatian had long been seeking the vacant bishopric;³ that he had succeeded by guile in enlisting the confessors under his banner,⁴ after Moyses had excommunicated him and the nucleus of his party; that he had invited to Rome three country bishops under the pretext of urgent business, and, having made them drunk, had compelled them to ordain him;⁵ that when young he had been under the influence of demoniacal possession,⁶ and was only baptised when apparently in his last agony; that in the persecution he had denied that he was a presbyter, and had shut himself up in his house, refusing to take any

¹ Ep. 59 (H., p. 676, 17).

² The letter is preserved by Eusebius (H. E., 6. 43).

³ Eus., H. E., 6. 43, § 5. ⁴ Eus., H. E., 6. 43, §§ 6, 20.

⁵ Eus., H. E., 6. 43, §§ 8, 9. ⁶ Eus., H. E., 6. 43, §§ 14, 15.

part in the work of assisting the brethren, and saying he was an adherent of another philosophy;¹ and finally, that he would administer the consecrated bread in the Eucharist to no one who would not swear "I will never go over to Cornelius."² In the same letter we read that he is a perjured liar, and a vile trickster,³ while elsewhere Cornelius writes the same to Cyprian.⁴

It is quite conceivable that, in the heat of the struggle, Cornelius did not discriminate between the parts played respectively by Novatus and Novatian. No man could have sustained opposite characters with the success attained by Novatus, had he not been a consummate diplomatist; but that Novatian, who was evidently one of the leading presbyters at Rome, and had been intrusted with the task of formulating the Church's reply to Cyprian,⁵ should be as black as his opponent paints him, is utterly improbable. We should be inclined rather to regard him as

¹ Eus., H. E., 6. 43, § 16.

² Eus., H. E., 6. 43, §§ 18, 19.

³ Eus., H. E., 6. 43, § 6.

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 49, Cornelius Cypriano (H., p. 611, 10).

⁵ This is hinted at by Cyprian (Ep. 55, § 5), who says that Novatian was the writer of Ep. 30. That the clergy should have chosen one in whom they had no confidence is unreasonable.

a learned man of philosophical tendencies,¹ who, with the idealist's futile fondness for high standards, sought to secure a purity of discipline and life which was in reality unattainable. A man of such character might be worked upon by a schemer like Novatus, not seeing whither he was being led. He would protest that he had no desire to become a bishop,² but Novatus would urge that it was for the good of the cause. His grave character would be the bait wherewith the austere confessors would be secured.

Would Dionysius of Alexandria have written his friendly letter to a man of confirmed ill-repute?³ It was only the force of circumstances which compelled Cyprian to abandon the position which fixity of purpose obliged Novatian to retain; Novatian stood firm, an unyielding dogmatist, while Cyprian moved with the times, a

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 55, § 16 (H., p. 635, 5): "Alia est philosophorum et Stoicorum ratio." Eus., H. E., 6. 43, § 16: ἐπέρας γὰρ εἶναι φιλοσοφίας ἔραστής.

² Eus., H. E., 6. 43, § 7, and H. E., 6. 45.

³ Eus., H. E., 6. 45. When Novatian heeded not this letter of advice, he wrote of him in strong terms (H. E., 7. 8). It is needless to try to explain the story of the drunken bishops (Cyprian makes no allusion to it,—cf. H., p. 642, 11, Ep. 55) and Novatian's behaviour at the Eucharist; but we have suggested the confusion between Novatian and Novatus, and further, stories grow with the telling.

conservative who yet knew that concessions were inevitable.

When once, however, Novatian had committed himself to oppose Cornelius, he knew that he must face the worst. Heretic bishop he might be, but he would send out his deputies, and gather adherents from East and West:¹ he would create bishops to supervise those in communion with him.² But these measures only aggravated the charge of schism which was laid at his door: he was without the pale of the Church, and no man outside her bounds might call himself a Christian.³ He might found a Church,⁴ he might call it by the high-sounding title of the "Pure,"⁵ he might rebaptise his converts,⁶ but it was a forlorn hope: the Catholic Church had closed her gates behind him, and he was a schismatic; no compromise was possible, he must fight to the end, side by side with the instigators of his secession.

It is noteworthy that Cyprian does not attempt to define the heresy of Novatian;⁷ in fact his followers were never regarded as heretics, and

¹ Ep. 55 (H., p. 642, 17).

² Ep. 55 (H., p. 642, 21).

³ Ep. 55 (H., p. 642, 6).

⁴ Ep. 55 (H., p. 642, 18).

⁵ Eus., 6, 43, § 1. Cf. Zonaras, 12, 20.

⁶ Ep. 73 (H., p. 779, 10). Cf. Ep. 69 (H., p. 752, § 3).

⁷ Ep. 55 (H., p. 642, 4).

at Nicæa they met with tolerant treatment.¹ The crucial point of difference between them and the Catholic Church was this: in the judgment of Novatian, no penitence, however long, was sufficient to atone for a fall into grievous sin,² or to entitle the penitent to renewed communion with the Church on earth; the Catholics, on the other hand, were prepared to temper justice with mercy, even in the case of apostasy, after long-continued penitence.

The point in which Cornelius had offended, and thus laid himself open to censure, was that he had restored to communion a presbyter named Trofimus and several of the laity, who had sacrificed.³ It is plain from Cyprian's attempt to explain away the charge as a baseless slander on the part of the Novatianists,⁴ that Cornelius had been unduly lax. What other charges appeared in the official circular letters from Novatian to the bishops we have no means of knowing.

¹ Cf. de Pressensé, iv. 7.

² Eus., 6. 43, § 1. Cf. Ep. 55 (H., p. 646, 12-15). Cf. the spurious treatise "Ad Novatianum," § 12 (H., p. 62, 7), and Ep. 68 (H., p. 744, 8-14).

³ Ep. 55 (H., p. 624, 19).

⁴ Ep. 55 (H., p. 631, §§ 11, 12). In § 10 Cyprian says that he was accused of being "libello maculatus," and of communicating with lapsed bishops.

Cyprian defends Cornelius with great vigour, pointing out that he had served with efficiency in the various Church offices which he had held, and that it was only by constraint that he was induced to accept the office of bishop.¹ He was consecrated in the presence of sixteen other Catholic bishops,² whose letters after the ordination bore unassailable testimony to his high merits: he was, lastly, almost unanimously elected,³ after opportunities for deliberation extending over more than a year. The only difficulty occasioned by the attitude of the Catholic Church in general and of Cornelius in particular towards the sick *lapsi*, was that some of those who had been restored to communion, when apparently dying, recovered, and then, by virtue of their illness alone, they were in the Church, while others, to whose conduct their own had been in no way superior, were excluded. Cyprian regards recovery under such circumstances as a token of the special fatherly mercy of God, and points out that no human agency is to be held responsible for the difficulty.⁴

¹ Ep. 55 (H., p. 629, 8-18).

² Ep. 55 (H., p. 642, 10).

³ Ep. 55 (H., p. 629, 18 ff.)

⁴ Ep. 55 (H., p. 633, § 13). Cyprian, with a touch of humour, says that it is impossible to put such people out of the way.

Cyprian, on learning from the envoys of Novatian that the confessors had taken their stand against Cornelius, wrote them an urgent letter of entreaty, calling upon them to return to the Holy Mother whom they had forsaken, and to take no further part in rending the body of Christ.¹ At the same time the Novatianist party at Rome, hearing of the contempt with which Carthage had treated their deputation, determined instantly to send a second, consisting of five members, under the leadership of Novatus.² These, of course, met with a similar reception to their predecessors, thanks to Cyprian's common-sense, and to a despatch from Cornelius which reached him on the day succeeding their arrival.³ From Nicephorus, who brought the letter from Cornelius, Cyprian learned also that immediately on the departure of Novatus⁴ the confessors had perceived the grievous error⁵ into which they had fallen, and expressed a desire

¹ Ep. 46.

² The other members were Nicostratus, who had been degraded from the diaconate for his acts of peculation (Ep. 52, H., p. 617, 1-8; Ep. 50, H., p. 613, 9-12); Euaristus, an exiled and deposed bishop, who had made shipwreck of himself and others (Ep. 52, H., p. 616, 15 ff.; Ep. 50, H., p. 613, 13-15); Primus and Dionysius.

³ Ep. 52 (H., p. 616, 13). ⁴ Ep. 52 (H., p. 618, 7).

⁵ Ep. 49 (H., p. 609, 2): "Cognito suo errore."

to resume communion with Cornelius.¹ They admitted that they had been cajoled into lending their support to the slanders which had been circulated concerning Cornelius,² and before the assembled presbytery³ they entreated that the past might be forgotten. Amid the rejoicings of the clergy they signified their entire submission to Cornelius, and acknowledged that in the Catholic Church one bishop existed by divine rule.⁴ The four confessors themselves notified Cyprian of their return with all speed,⁵ and he immediately despatched a reply⁶ to their letter, congratulating them on taking the important step. There was only one presbyter among them, Maximus, and he was immediately restored to his office, having been suspended only temporarily.⁷ "We have been thoroughly tricked," they said. "We joined Novatian on leaving prison in February, when no faction had been

¹ Ep. 49 (H., p. 609, 8-11).

² Ep. 49 (H., pp. 609, 16-610, 4).

³ Ep. 49 (H., p. 610, 7).

⁴ Ep. 49 (H., p. 611, 4-16).

⁵ Ep. 53.

⁶ Ep. 54.

⁷ Müller (p. 217) argues that they returned on terms not of penance but of reconciliation. When Novatus left Rome, Novatian could not play the part of trickster, and so the four confessors—Maximus, Urbannus, Sidonius, and Macarius—under pressure from the friends of Cyprian and Cornelius, returned to their allegiance.

organised, and then, when we began to see whither he was leading us, we were silenced by his eloquent¹ arguments, and by the falsehoods of Novatus."² The confessors returned to the Church in the autumn of 251, and a little later Cornelius, at length secure from any serious opposition, held at Rome a synod comprising over sixty bishops, and a still larger number of the inferior clergy, at which Novatian and his followers were declared to be enemies of the faith.³ The same assembly signified its assent to the decisions of the African council, which had met shortly after Easter under Cyprian's presidency, and had communicated its resolutions to Cornelius. Cyprian himself thus describes the proceedings of his synod:⁴ "According to the arrangement whereby we were to meet as soon as the return of peace allowed, a goodly number of bishops, whom their faith in the protection of God had kept from falling, assembled together, and we weighed the question with wise deliberation, bringing forward the witness of the Scriptures on either side. The

¹ Ep. 60 (H., p. 694, 1).

² Ep. 49 (H., p. 611, 11). Cf. Eus., H. E., 6. 43, § 6—a dark picture.

³ Eus., H. E., 6. 43, § 2.

⁴ Ep. 55 (H., p. 627, § 6) to Antonianus.

hope of ultimate communion and restoration was not withheld from the *lapsi* lest they should be driven to despair, and, feeling they were shut out of the Church, should return to the life of the world; on the other hand, we did not weaken the strictures of the Gospel, and so allow the *lapsi* to rush into communion as they would, but we required a lengthy period of penitence, and that with patience they should entreat our fatherly indulgence. The case and needs of each individual were to be investigated, as you will read in the report which, I trust, has reached you, and in which our resolutions are severally written. . . . I wrote to this effect also to Cornelius at Rome, who, in council with many of his fellow-bishops, after grave and moderate discussion, acquiesced in our decisions." A middle course was adopted. It was recognised that there were varying degrees of guilt, and that these required different treatment.¹ A *libellaticus* was not guilty of so grievous an error as a *sacrificatus*; nor again was the guilt of a man who had sacrificed in order to screen his family so heinous as that of one who had dragged his

¹ Ep. 55, p. 633, 1-14; Ep. 57, p. 652, 10-16. Cf. also Hefele's article, "Abgefallene," in Wetzer and Welte's 'Kirchen-Lexicon.'

household before the altar. It was therefore decided¹ that a *libellaticus* should, on being found to be truly penitent, be restored at once; but that a *sacrificatus* should perform a long penance, although, if he should be laid suddenly on his death-bed, the Church would grant him the benefit of her ministrations.

These were the broad lines on which the pleas of the *lapsi* were to be considered: individual cases of doubt occurred, in which Cyprian was asked to interpret the rules laid down. Such an instance is presented to us in Ep. 56, where we read that certain *lapsi* had endured a two years' penance for their fall. At their first trial they had repulsed all attacks on their faith, but the proconsul, with his exquisite tortures, had overcome the poor weak flesh, and they denied their Master. Such men, Cyprian decided, had shown that they were true at heart, and he doubted not that God would forgive their bodily infirmity.

Those of the clergy who had lapsed were readmitted to the Church as laymen, having for ever forfeited their priesthood.² During this

¹ Ep. 55 (H., p. 636, 6-10).

² Ep. 55, p. 632, § 11. Cyprian shrinks as much from the idea that Cornelius had communicated with Trofimus as a

council a resolution was also passed declaring that communion with Novatian was impossible for all who recognised that Cornelius had been regularly ordained to succeed to the see of Rome.¹ With Novatian, Novatus and Felicissimus² fell under the ban of the Church in Africa.

At a council held on May 15, 252, the various decisions relating to the *lapsi* were revised in view of later events, chief among which was the imminence of a fresh persecution. At this council, Privatus, an old heretic bishop from Lambæsis, who had been condemned many years previously by a synod of ninety bishops, desired to have his case reconsidered. When this was refused, he secured the co-operation of four other heretic or lapsed bishops,³ and consecrated

presbyter, as with the apostate bishops mentioned in § 10. Of Fortunatianus, Bishop of Assuras, Cyprian writes (Ep. 65, H., p. 723, 15) : "Qui sacrilega sacrificia fecerunt, sacerdotium Dei sibi vindicare non possunt." Again, in the case of Basilides and Martialis (Ep. 67, H., p. 741, 8) the decree is : "Eiusmodi homines ad pænitentiam quidem agendam posse admitti, ab ordinatione autem cleri atque sacerdotali honore prohiberi." Cf. Eus., H.E., 6. 43, § 10. The bishops who had ordained Novatian bishop were *ipso facto* schismatics.

¹ Ep. 68 (H., p. 745, 5-13).

² Ep. 59 (H., pp. 666, 13-16, and 676, 5-8).

³ From the first day of persecution (Ep. 59, H., p. 679, 21 ff.) they had regularly communicated with the *lapsi*. Cf. also Ep. 59, p. 680, 13 ff.

Fortunatus bishop, to take Cyprian's place.¹ They asserted later that twenty-five Numidian bishops had been present at the ceremony:² in point of fact, however, the followers of Fortunatus were very few in number,³ and Cyprian claims that the number of clergy who condemned the party at the synod of May 251 was larger than the entire faction in July 252. It should be borne in mind that these schismatic bishops were not members of Novatian's faction; they held no austere opinions about the purity of the Church; they had not veered round with Novatus; they were, in fact, at the opposite pole to Maximus,⁴ while Cyprian steered his course midway between the two extremes. Fortunatus despatched Felicissimus and others to Rome to demand recognition from Cornelius, when they worked upon his mind with their threats until he wavered, and was obliged to write for advice to Cyprian,⁵ who answered with Ep. 59—a letter of strong remonstrance.

We cannot further follow these schisms in detail. At the end of 252 Cyprian found him-

¹ Ep. 59 (H., p. 677, § 10). ² Ep. 59 (H., p. 679, 16).

³ Ep. 59 (H., p. 684, 8-13).

⁴ *I.e.*, the newly-created Novatianist bishop in Africa. Cf. p. 195, note 1.

⁵ These incidents are drawn from Ep. 59.

self opposed by two schismatic bodies: the rigid, which sided with Novatian, with Maximus as one of its bishops; and the lax, which numbered but few adherents, and included Fortunatus and several other heretic bishops. The latter faction speedily disappeared, but Novatianism lasted almost into the seventh century. Within three years of its birth it had found adherents in Palestine, Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Egypt. Dionysius of Alexandria was a strong supporter of Cornelius, and urged his claims upon Fabius of Antioch, whose weight seemed to be thrown on the side of Novatian.¹ A council was called at Antioch, where the matter was to be sifted, but Fabius died before the date fixed.² The Novatianists were undisturbed by the persecution of Gallus,³ but Novatian himself was martyred under Valerian.⁴ They were not affected by the laws of Constantine against heretics,⁵ their bishop, Acesius, being in good repute with the emperor. Till at least the year 375 the Novatianist party made no change in the date on which they kept

¹ Eus., H.E., 6. 44.

² Eus., H.E., 6. 46.

³ Cyprian, Ep. 61, § 3 (p. 696, 7). This Cyprian regards as a criterion of a true or false Church, whether or no it suffers persecution.

⁴ Socrates, H.E., 4. 24.

⁵ Sozomen, 2. 32.

Easter,¹ while they held thoroughly orthodox views on the divinity of Christ.²

¹ Socrates, H.E., 4. 24.

² Sozomen, H.E., 2. 32. For this schism generally, cf. Benson, p. 141.

Note.—Aubespine¹ (p. 149) notices that the power of the martyrs to grant absolution varied according as they were priests or laymen. He observes that, technically, a lay martyr might absolve from only the *pæna*, but that a priest might loose from the *culpa* as well. It is plain, however, from what Cyprian says of Lucianus, that the lay martyrs arrogated to themselves the right of entire absolution, regarding the bishop's part in the matter as being merely a technical ratification. Tertullian was the first to deny their right, and Cyprian did what he could to curb their power, which they had almost entirely lost by Nicene times. From Cyprian (Epp. 14 and 22) we learn that a martyr's recommendation was properly of no avail until his death.

¹ Aubespine, *De veteribus ecclesiae ritibus observationes*, lib. ii.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PERSECUTION IN EGYPT AND THE EAST.

EGYPT — ARREST OF DIONYSIUS — HIS CLERGY — THE SACRIFICES — THE FAITHFUL — SOME SUFFERED NON-OFFICIALLY — VARIOUS ACCOUNTS — PEACE — THE “LAPSI” — SYRIA — ALEXANDER, BABYLAS, ORIGEN — ASIA MINOR — GREGORY THAUMATURGUS AND NEO-CÆSAREA — THE BISHOPS IN THE PERSECUTION — ‘ACTA MARTYRUM’ — ACTA ACHATII, MAXIMI, PETRI, LUCIANI ET MARTIANI, NESTORIS — OTHER ACTA — ‘ACTA PIONII’ — EXTERNAL EVIDENCE — INTERNAL EVIDENCE — TRANSLATION OF THE PIONIAN DOCUMENT — THE TRIAL OF PIONIUS, FROM OFFICIAL SOURCES — HIS END — REMARKS UPON THE ACTA — CONCLUSION TO BE DRAWN.

APPENDIX A. ON THE BASES OF THE ‘ACTA SANCTORUM.’

APPENDIX B. LINGUISTIC RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN ‘ACTA PIONII’ AND THE TWO SMYRNÆAN RECORDS OF POLYCARP.

I. EGYPT.

A FEW excerpts from the letters of Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, preserved by Eusebius in his History, and the recently recovered *libelli* (which we discussed in chapter vii.), constitute

our sole evidence for the facts of the persecution in Egypt. The narrative of Dionysius is simple and straightforward, but gives few indications of the method followed by the Imperial officials, detailing rather the personal sufferings of individuals than the general attitude of the Government, and the principles on which the examination of recalcitrants was conducted. From his witness alone we should be unable to form a correct opinion as to the extent of the inquiry, and to discover whether only those suspected of being Christians were called upon to sacrifice, or whether a universal public compliance was demanded, and also as to the precise object of the persecution, whether corrective or solely punitive. As these questions were discussed in an earlier chapter, we may proceed without delay to consider the account of Dionysius.

In the course of the year 248 there had appeared at Alexandria¹ a frenzied rhapsodist, who, by means of his poems, worked upon the superstitious minds of the populace with such success that an outcry arose against the Christians, and a furious onset was made upon them, in which many met with a violent death. This crisis was

¹ Eus., H. E., 6. 41, § 1.

only brought to an end by a civic struggle¹ at Alexandria, which diverted the energies of the anti-Christian mob from its victims. The short respite thus gained gave place to an uneasy suspense, when the news arrived that the Emperor Philip had fallen, and that the new reign would be marked by reforms, religious as well as political.² In the early months of 250 appeared the edict from Rome: it was so stringent as to “cause to stumble, if it were possible, even the elect.”³

A short time before the arrival of the edict, Sabinus, the governor, decided to secure the person of the bishop⁴ (thus precluding any possibility of his escape when the blow fell), and with that object sent an officer to apprehend Dionysius. It was expected he would take to flight, and consequently the *frumentarius* instituted a search of all the places in the neighbourhood likely to afford shelter to a fugitive.⁵ When the search had lasted for four days, Dionysius, who had

¹ Eus., H. E., 6. 41, § 9: ή στάσις καὶ δ πόλεμος δ ἐμφύλιος.

² Eus., H. E., 6. 41, § 9: δ τῆς ἑψ̄ ἡμᾶς ἀπειλῆς φόβος.

³ Eus., H. E., 6. 41, § 10. ⁴ Eus., H. E., 6. 40, § 2.

⁵ Eus., H. E., 6. 40, § 2: πάντα μὲν ἀνερευνῶν, τοὺς ποταμὸύς, τὰς ὁδούς. By the *ποταμοί*, says Allard, p. 362, we are to understand the mouths by which the Nile enters the sea, where there would be wharves and sheds which might conceal a fugitive. For *frumentarius*, cf. ‘Aur. Vict. Cæss.,’ 39. 44: “Remoto pestilenti frumentariorum genere, quorum nunc

waited for his arrest at home, decided upon flight, but was captured with four companions, Gaius, Faustus, Peter, and Paul, and conveyed by an armed escort to Taposiris.¹ Timotheus, a friend of Dionysius, on discovering the bishop's house to be filled with soldiers, took to flight, and related his trouble to a wayfarer whom he encountered.² Now this man happened to be on his way to a feast at Marea, and on his arrival he told his friends the story he had casually heard.³ With the traditional readiness of the Egyptian peasantry to turn against the Roman soldiery,⁴ a regular assault was planned from the village,⁵ and the soldiers were dispersed, while Dionysius fell into the hands of the victors. When he found that they were not robbers, but friends, the bishop besought them to kill him before he was recaptured, and utterly refused to accompany them.⁶ He was, however, lifted up and set upon

agentes rerum (358 A.D.), simillimi sunt, qui cum ad explorandum annuntiandumque, qui forte in provinciis motus existerent, instituti viderentur, compositis nefarie criminationibus, injecto passim metu præcipue remotissimo cuncta fœde diripiebant."

¹ Eus., H. E., 6. 40, § 4.

² Eus., 6. 40, §§ 4, 5.

³ Eus., H. E., 6. 40, § 6.

⁴ Allard, p. 361.

⁵ Marea was a village a little south-west of Alexandria. For the story cf. Dion. Alex., Ep. ad Germauum; ap. Eus., H. E. 7. 11, § 22.

⁶ Eus., H. E., 6. 40, §§ 7, 8.

an ass, and transported, in company with Peter and Paul, to a sequestered spot in the desert, three days' journey from Parætonium,¹ where he remained in safety until all danger was at an end.

The place of the absent bishop was ably filled by the inferior clergy, who succeeded in visiting the imprisoned brethren without being detected. Two presbyters, Faustinus and Aquila, were too well known to be able to remain with safety in the city, and were therefore compelled to seek refuge in another part of Egypt; but Maximus, Dioscorus, Demetrius, and Lucius, with the help of Faustus, Eusebius, and Chæremon, three deacons who had survived the recent plague, were able to perform all necessary offices, although incurring great personal risk. The deacon Eusebius was more particularly of service in visiting the confessors in prison, and giving the martyrs decent burial; and God vouchsafed him protection, although the governor was unwearying in his efforts to carry out the edict, ruthlessly killing, torturing, or confining those who were brought before him, while he had enjoined that no one should approach the confessors, and strict watch was kept to see

¹ Eus., H. E., 7. 11, § 23. Parætonium is close to Marea.

that the order was obeyed.¹ Here again, as at Carthage, it is difficult to understand how it was possible for the confessors to be visited in prison by those who were evidently Christians, without the instant arrest of the latter.

When the time appointed by the edict arrived, all eyes were fixed on the conduct of the upper classes, who, as it seems, gave way in a body. Many of them were spurred on by terror, others yielded to the entreaties of their friends, and those who held Government offices were obliged to assist at sacrifices in the execution of their daily duty. Thus an immense number of the *elite* presented themselves to obey the order to sacrifice. As the actors in this curious drama were called upon to approach the altar, their countenances and demeanour betrayed only too plainly their feelings. Some went up pale and trembling, as though about to be the victims themselves; these provided a vast fund of amusement to the surrounding crowds, who laughed to think that they were as much afraid to sacrifice as they were too cowardly to die. Others hast-

¹ Eus., H. E., 7. 11, §§ 24, 25. Eusebius afterwards became Bishop of Laodicea in Syria, Maximus succeeded Dionysius at Alexandria, while Faustus was beheaded in the persecution of Diocletian.

ened confidently to the altar, protesting that they had never been Christians at any time.¹ Among the common people there were not wanting those who followed the steps of their superiors, and sacrificed in grievous terror or with unblushing alacrity, but others sought refuge in exile, and some refusing to deny their faith, were arrested.

Of those who were arrested, some stood firm till they were confronted with the prison-house and bonds, some endured several days of imprisonment, but recanted before they were brought to trial, while others actually faced torture for some time before their courage failed them. But the “pillars of the Lord” received strength and endurance sufficient from Him, and stood noble witnesses of His kingdom.² Men and women, young and old, soldiers and citizens of every description, overcame in the fight, and won their crowns after scourging or burning or beheading.³ Some were not accounted ready to meet their Lord so soon, and these, like Dionysius himself, were reserved until their time was fully come. Among those who suffered for their faith, we

¹ Perhaps Diogenes, son of Satabus, the recipient of the *libellus*, was one of these.

² Eus., H. E., 6. 41, §§ 11-14.

³ Eus., H. E., 7. 11, §§ 20, 21.

find Julianus, an old man suffering from gout, who could neither stand nor walk: he and one of his bearers, Cronion, stoutly confessed their Master, and were mounted on camels and made to ride the gauntlet amid a shower of missiles, and, finally, were burned in the sight of the mob. One of the soldiers who was in charge of them, a Christian named Besas, attempted to protect them as far as possible, but in obedience to an outcry from the crowd was arrested and beheaded.

A Libyan, named Macar, paid no heed to the earnest solicitations of his judge, who entreated him to reconsider his decision to confess Christ, and was led away and burnt. Epimachus and Alexander, who had endured a long period of imprisonment, and had in the course of it been tortured and scourged continually, were finally burnt to death: at the same time were beheaded four women, one of whom, Ammonarium, a saintly virgin, declared that she would never repeat the blasphemous words suggested by her judge, and, although he employed against her all his subtlest artifices and his cruellest tortures, she was enabled to give effect to her vow; while the other three—Mercuria, a reverend matron, Dionysia, who bade farewell to a numerous family

rather than deny her Lord, and another—escaped the torture, which had been concentrated upon Ammonium, the judge shrinking from the idea of torturing more women, and finally admitting himself beaten.

Dioscorus, a boy of fifteen, was brought before the judge, who attempted first to play upon his simplicity and then to subdue with the torture his weakly frame, but without success. Finally, the judge, complimenting him on his brave bearing before the court and on the sagacity of his answers, said that on account of his youth he would grant him a respite for repentance. Heron, Ater, and Isidorus, who had been brought up for trial with him, were treated with great severity, and after a constant confession burnt. Information was laid against Nemesion, an Egyptian, to the effect that he had kept company with robbers, but he disproved the accusation before the centurion: he was then brought before the governor on the charge of being a Christian, and after receiving double the torture and double the scourging that the robbers received, he was burned between them, thus recalling the manner of his Master's death.

A small band of soldiers, standing before the

place of trial, observed that a Christian who was under examination was wavering and likely to give way, and they signalled vigorously to him to stand firm. This naturally attracted attention to them, but before they could be seized, they ran up to the tribune, shouting that they were Christians, and alarmed the president of the court and his assessors. By this action they encouraged the persons under examination and intimidated their judges, and then, rejoicing in their witness for God, they triumphantly left the court-house.¹

Many others in the cities and villages of Egypt suffered at the hands of the heathen populace. Ischyrion, the steward of a local magnate, refused to comply with his master's order to sacrifice, and bore meekly a torrent of abuse; finally, his master took up a large stick and killed him. Many, as at Carthage, fled into desert places and mountains, where they perished through hunger, thirst, exposure, pestilence, or the attacks of robbers and wild beasts: the hardships they endured were graphically described by the survivors. As

¹ Eus., H. E., 6. 41, §§ 15-23. Cf. generally Peter of Alexandria, who wrote about the persecution of Diocletian, in Routh, 'Reliquæ Sacrae,' 6. 12, 14.

an example of what often happened, Chæremon, the Bishop of Nilopolis, is mentioned. He fled with his wife to the "Arabian Mountain," and neither of them was ever heard of again, although a diligent search was repeatedly made for them. Many others who escaped to the same place were captured by the natives, and only those who had friends prepared to pay the ransom demanded ever returned.¹

Jerome gives a story, dressed in a legendary garb, of two Christians whose faith was assailed during this persecution.² One of them was martyred in a revolting fashion, while the other was tempted to betray his chastity. It was only by biting out his tongue and casting it into the face of his tempter that he was enabled finally to repulse the sin that threatened him. In this case we can only say that a basis of fact probably existed on which the story, as we have it, grew up by the aid of successive accretions. We have a somewhat similar account in the acts of Dionysia at Lampsacus, but this again partakes of a legendary character.³ This mode of inducing

¹ Eus., H. E., 6. 42, §§ 1-4.

² Vita Pauli.

³ Görres quotes Tert., Apol., 50, where there is a case of a Christian maiden who is confronted with the same temptation.

compliance, by a violation of the victim's chastity, seems to belong rather to the system of persecution as carried out under Diocletian.¹

Peace was practically restored to the Church, so far as imperial attacks were concerned, by the early months of 251.² Dionysius therefore returned to his see for Easter, as Cyprian at Carthage had hoped to do, but, owing to a re-crudescence of the civic troubles, which had given the Church respite two years before, the Alexandrian bishop found his flock ranged in hostile factions, and was again only able to hold communion with his Church by letter.³ The troubles of this year, which included a famine, were succeeded in 252 by a terrible pestilence, of which we shall read again in connection with the reign of Gallus. It is plain that the bishop was prevented from presiding officially at Alexandria at the Easter festival of 252,⁴ and although he may have rendered the same assistance to the sufferers from the awful visitation of that year as did Cyprian at Carthage, it is probable that he did not resume regular work at Alexandria until

¹ Cf. Mason, *Persecution of Diocletian*. Cf., however, Cyprian, *De Mortalitate*, § 15 (H., p. 306, l. 18).

² Eus., 7. 21, § 1.

³ Eus., 7. 21, § 1.

⁴ Eus., H. E., 7. 22, § 1.

the period of peace which followed on the death of Gallus in 253.¹

There were three classes of *lapsi* of which we read at Alexandria: whether there were also *libellatrici* as at Carthage, it is impossible to say. We have no means whatever of judging whether Aurelius Diogenes, son of Satabus, and the brothers Syrus and Pasbeius with their wives, the records of whose compliance the Faioum has rendered up, obtained these certificates to save them from further annoyance after they had once sacrificed, or whether the *libelli* are the witnesses to bargains as discreditable to religion as to public administration. In fact, we have no knowledge that these persons were Christians at all. The three classes, as we have seen, were (1) those who sacrificed without hesitation; (2) those who complied with evident fear and re-

¹ The stages of the disturbances at Alexandria are marked by Dionysius thus:—

248. The popular outbreak which ὅλον ἐνιαυτὸν προῦλαβε (6. 41, 1).
249. ἡ στάσις καὶ ὁ πόλεμος ὁ ἐμφύλιος (6. 41, 9).
250. The persecution: “ἥμᾶς ἤλασαν,” and “διωκόμενοι καὶ θανατούμενοι ἔορτάσαμεν” (7. 22, 4).
251. Recrudescence of civil war, πάλιν ἐνταῦθα στάσεως καὶ πολέμου συστάντος (7. 21, 1), and πόλεμος καὶ λιμός (7. 22, 5).
252. Pestilence, μετὰ ταῦτα λοιμικὴ νόσος (7. 22, 1 and 6).

gret; (3) those who were prepared to make some sacrifice for their faith, but not to face long-continued torture or death. There was no precedent to guide the bishop in dealing with these self-excommunicated brethren: there was no statesman like Cyprian at hand to advise him as to the expediency of a concession, or the duty of recognising degrees of guilt. That perplexing questions did arise we see if we turn to an extract from the letter of Dionysius to Fabius of Antioch:¹ "You must know that the holy martyrs of our Church, who are now seated with Christ and have fellowship in His kingdom, and are joined with Him in His judgment, received some of the brethren who had lapsed and been guilty of sacrificing to idols; and when they observed their conversion and repentance, and judged that it would be acceptable to Him that willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather his repentance, they received them and held communion with them, and made them partakers in their prayers and feasts. How do ye advise us to act herein, my brethren? What course should we adopt? Are we to be of one mind with the martyrs and acquiesce in their decision? Are we to ob-

¹ Eus., H. E., 6. 42, §§ 5, 6.

serve their ruling and the favour they have accorded, and deal gently with those on whom they have had pity? Or are we to hold their judgment to be invalid, thus setting up ourselves as judges of their resolution, wounding their generous feelings, and disturbing order?"

How the question was settled we know not. Here our evidence fails us, and here, in consequence, we must close our study of the persecution in Egypt. The Church seems to have suffered disastrous losses among the upper classes, and to have found its strength to be in those in the lower ranks of society. If we have not found in our gleanings from Eusebius much to advance our scientific knowledge of the persecution, we have at any rate been dealing with the actors in this particular scene in such an intimate manner as brings them nearer to us than any with whom we have met hitherto.

II. SYRIA.

We possess but meagre accounts of the persecution in Palestine, our knowledge being confined to a few details respecting the sufferings of certain of the leading figures in the Church.

Alexander¹ the bishop of Jerusalem, was arraigned at Cæsarea for the second time to answer to the charge of Christianity laid against him, and a second time he witnessed a good confession, and was condemned to imprisonment, although advanced in years. After his brilliant confession in the court of the governor, he died in prison, and was succeeded by Mazabanes.

Babylas² the Bishop of Antioch, died in prison at the same time, after confessing his faith, and was succeeded by Fabius.

Origen³ was “the object of the fiercest onslaught of the wicked one, who arrayed against him every resource and every wile, and surpassed in violence in his case any of the assaults he had directed against other Christians. Origen endured bonds and bodily tortures, the penalties of the iron hook and the inner ward, and was racked for many days with his body stretched as far as the fifth hole: the hero’s letters show truly and accurately the bravery wherewith he met the

¹ Eus., H. E., 6. 39, §§ 2, 3. Cf. Epiphanius, *De pond. et mens.*, § 18. Alexander was tried the first time under Maximin.

² Eus., H. E., 6. 39, § 4. Epiphanius, *loc. cit.* Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, § 62: he died at Cæsarea. Chron. Pasch., Ol. 258.

³ Eus., H. E., 6. 39, § 5.

threatened burning and all the tortures that were heaped upon him ; they show how gloriously he reached the end of his confession, in which his judge had exerted all his ingenuity to keep him from dying ; they show, lastly, the words he uttered after it was over, words full of encouragement to all who need help." The letters of Origen are lost, but the fragments preserved by Eusebius make us desire more. It is probable that he outlived the Emperor Gallus, and died a peaceful death towards the close of 253, under Æmilianus or Valerian.¹

Were it not for one remark, the value of which may be very slight, we should have no indication whatever that any persecution was carried on in Palestine except in the case of the leading figures of the Church, as under the rule of Maximin. We read in the 'Chronicon Paschale' (Ol. 258), after the mention of the death of Babylas, that "*many others* attained to martyrdom in the East and in other provinces for their faith in Christ." There may be as good a foundation for this assertion as there is for the statement made in the same passage respecting Alexander of Jerusalem,

¹ Epiphanius, *loc. cit.* The same authority says that he finally went to Tyre, although Pamphilus of Cæsarea says that he was martyred at Cæsarea.

which is taken almost word for word from Eusebius, and for that concerning Pionius of Smyrna, which seems to be copied exactly, with the exception of an intentional change, from the Greek MS. It seems unlikely, however, that the persecution was as general in Palestine as in other parts of the Roman empire. The Jews had special permission to worship their own national God, and were excepted from the obligation to conform. The discrimination between those who worshipped the same Supreme Being under forms so nearly allied would be an operation far too delicate and complicated for the governor to carry out except in such prominent cases as those of the bishops and notable clergy, and any others to whom the animosity of the local synagogue refused to allow the safety which the similarity of their religions would afford.

III. ASIA MINOR.

From Syria we pass northwards into Asia Minor, and here our attention is first claimed by Pontus. Gregory, the Bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia, has left an account¹ of the persecu-

¹ Gregory of Nyssa, in Migne's Patrology, vol. iii. *Vita Thaumaturgi*, 944 ff.

tion in that province, with a special reference to the flight and deliverance of the Bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, Gregory, commonly known as Thaumaturgus. His narrative is, as we might expect, highly coloured: it is probably based on an oral account; but we must bear in mind the fact that in proportion as the persecution moved eastward, greater licence marked the proceedings of the local governors, who knew that there was but little fear of an appeal to the emperor, and were equally certain that they would conciliate the goodwill of the provincials by a vigorous attack upon the proscribed sect.

The edict, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," found in the governor at Neo-Cæsarea one who was glad to carry out its provisions to the utmost. A man cruel and saturnine by nature, and also an enemy of Christianity, he caused terrible proclamations to be issued, commanding instant conformity on pain of the most exquisite tortures and death. All public business was made to give way before the paramount object of the suppression of Christianity. Nor were words the only means employed to inspire fear, for before the appointed day for compliance the varied array of implements of torture was exposed to public

view. There were swords and red-hot irons, wild beasts and racks; iron chairs which could be heated, wooden frames whereon recalcitrants might be extended and torn with iron claws, together with countless other instruments designed for the occasion, and capable of producing the most refined tortures. It seemed to be a matter of emulation among those who presided over these machines that no man should allow his fellow to surpass him in the pain he could cause to his victims.

The usual methods of obtaining a conviction were not allowed to fall into disuse. Public impeachment and private information were commonly employed: some would make it their business to hunt out Christians in hiding, others to search for those in exile; others, again, with an eye to the property of believers, would drag them before the judge in order to secure a proportion of their confiscated property, and this under the name of religion. Boundless confusion and universal suspicion followed on these measures: fathers could not trust their children, children were not protected by their natural relationship to their parents: this was especially the case when families contained both believers and heathens. The deserts were full of refugees,

homes were left desolate ; the prisons were not large enough to contain the throngs of Christians. There was one law for all ; the prevailing cruelty took no account of sex, and men and women suffered alike.

At the first note of warning Gregory had withdrawn from the city in company with a deacon whom he had converted to the faith from being a temple-official. From his hiding-place he continually urged those Christians who were still at large to follow his example, and secure a shelter from the storm among the mountains or in the desert : this course, as we have seen, was pursued by many. After various vicissitudes and a narrow escape of capture, Gregory succeeded in baffling his pursuers, who devoted themselves to the work of bringing to justice all the Christian inhabitants of the city and its neighbourhood, with the result that the law courts were filled, and the executioners kept busily employed. When peace was restored on the fall of the Emperor Decius, the bishop rejoined his church.

At this point we cannot refrain from noting a strange fact, that whereas it is almost certain that special directions were issued with regard to the bishops, we hear of the deaths of very few bishops in proportion to the number of

churches affected by the persecution. It argues extraordinary weakness on the part of the authorities that Cyprian at Carthage, Firmilian¹ in Cappadocia, Gregory in Pontus, were all able to escape from the scene of danger, while Dionysius of Alexandria was rescued from his captors, apparently with little difficulty, by a peasant mob. We have accounted for the deaths of Alexander of Jerusalem and Babylas of Antioch and the violence employed towards Origen by the fact that these three were almost the only victims that Syria could offer to the emperor's religious ideal. That it was the original intention to deprive the Church of her bishops may be inferred from the promptitude with which Fabianus of Rome was seized. We read, again, of numerous bishops, such as Caldonius, Fortunatus, Pompeius, and Stephanus, who presided over less important African sees, and passed through the persecution unscathed. This disobedience to orders was probably one of the chief causes of the failure of the persecution: so long as the bishop was yet alive, and continued to exhort and advise his church, the paralysis

¹ Firmilian, who was Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia before Maximin (Eus., 6. 26), was still bishop in the time of Stephanus of Rome (Eus., 7. 5).

which was desired could not ensue, and this intangible source of strength availed naturally to counteract much of the damage done.

We have now reached the point at which the contemporary writers of the third century fail us, and for the remainder of our inquiry into the persecution in Asia Minor we are dependent not upon the business-like letters of a Cyprian, or the simple narrative of a Dionysius, but upon the very questionable authority of the ‘Acta Martyrum,’ the sources and composition of which are matter for considerable doubt. Concerning this period Cardinal Baronius has written:¹ “The scarcity of independent writers leaves the age of Decius shrouded in thickest darkness; and the little light that is thrown upon the gloom is only such as contemporary Christian writers and the ‘Acts of the Holy Martyrs’ are able to give.” We may supplement this opinion by a quotation from M. Aubé:² “Where credible history furnishes evidence, legend is silent, but if history speaks not, legend is productive of stories without number. It is the part of legend to relate with boundless assurance the histories of martyrdoms, concerning which contemporary writers are silent,

¹ Baronius, *Martyrologium Romanum*, February 17.

² Aubé, *Les Chrétiens et l'Empire Romain* (180-249), Preface.

but it often happens that we find embedded in these curious depositories of tradition historical facts, which we seize upon with delight. The difficulty lies in disentangling them from their surroundings. . . After all, what are the Acts of Martyrs but ballads of the Early Church, an immense and heterogeneous epopee, in which fiction has swallowed up fact?"

With this estimate we are cordially in agreement, so far as it concerns the majority of the *Acta* of our period : there is one member of the collection, however, the '*Acta Pionii*', which is worthy of, and shall receive, fuller consideration. The more important of the remaining *Acta* we shall meanwhile discuss briefly, extracting from them such historical elements as we shall judge them to possess.

(i) *Acta Achatii*.¹—Achatius was Bishop of Antioch,² and the mainstay of the local church. He was commanded to sacrifice to the emperor by Martianus, a *consularis*, and administrator of the edict in the province. On the refusal of Achatius to comply, a discussion ensued. Then followed the command to sacrifice to the gods,

¹ Ruinart, *Acta Sincera Primorum Martyrum* (Paris, 1689), p. 139.

² Antioch in Pisidia is suggested by Allard, p. 412.

Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Apollo, or *Æsculapius*, on pain of death. Achatius again refused, and was then ordered to collect all the adherents of the Catholic creed, and adopt the emperor's religion: he was bidden to give all their names on pain of death. Declining once more to obey, he was remanded to the cells, in order that his case might be considered by the emperor. Martianus forwarded a report to Decius, who was much struck by the clever defence made by Achatius, and admired his bearing to such an extent that he ordered his immediate release, which took place on March 29, 251.

Dr Görres¹ points out three improbabilities in the story, which occur both in the old texts and in M. Aubé's newly discovered MS.² (a) Achatius reviles the Olympian gods, representing them both as criminals and as powerless idols. (b) Martianus refers the case to Decius for decision: this is improbable, considering the terms of the edict and the area of its operation. (c) The emperor is gratified by the inflexibility of Achatius, and orders his release, while promoting

¹ Dr F. Görres, Kirche und Statt von Decius bis zum Regierungs antritt Diocletians in Jahrbücher für Prot. Théol., xvi. 1890 (pp. 470, 471).

² Aubé, p. 181, n. 2. Bib. Nat. de Paris, fonds lat. nouv. acq., 2179.

Martianus to be governor of Pamphylia. The opinion of Görres¹ is that of one who has examined the ‘Acta Achatii’ with more thoroughness than any other writer, and he holds that the doings of a historical confessor, Achatius, have been clothed in an entirely fictitious dress—that he was an oriental bishop, who was imprisoned for a considerable period, and was released by the governor, without any intervention on the part of the emperor, at the same time, February or March 251, and for the same cause, as the Roman confessors—namely, the general slackening of the persecution. The province of Pamphylia probably fell to Martianus in the April of 251, in succession to the governor who had judged Nestor, Bishop of Sida in Pamphylia. This province² (really a double one, including Lycia) was from 103 to 313 under a proconsul, and it is very unlikely that so strong a supporter of the Senate as Decius should take out of its hands the appointment to this senatorial province

¹ In ‘Zeitschrift für Wiss. Théol.’ xxii. 1879; “Der Bekenner Achatius,” pp. 67 and 94.

² Görres, *loc. cit.*, p. 84. Cf. the collocation in ‘Acta Nestoris’ (Aubé, p. 508 : *κατάρχειν τῆς ἡγεμονίας τῆς τε Λυκίας καὶ Παμφυλίας καὶ τῆς Φρυγίας*. He quotes an official document of the time of Diocletian, where Pamphylia stands for Pamphylia and Lycia.

and give it to a *consularis*, a friend of his own. Lastly, Dr Görres points out two anachronisms: first, Martianus is represented as calling for all those who belong to the *lex Catholica*, a term which for some time before and after was only in use among the Christians themselves; and second, Martianus speaks of the Montanists (*i.e.*, the Cataphryges, who had only existed about a hundred years) as *antiquæ religionis*, representing them as having apostatised in the most wholesale way, although there is no contemporary evidence of any such lapse. It is needless to go into further details: enough has been said to show that the story is beset with historic improbabilities, although it would be an exceedingly difficult task to attempt to define the position of the dividing line between the original substance and later accretions. With this dictum of Dr Görres we concur entirely.

(ii) *Acta Maximi.*¹—Maximus made no attempt to conceal his belief, and was brought before Optimus,² proconsul of Asia. He was asked if he was aware of the imperial decree

¹ Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*, p. 144.

² The proconsul at this time of the Roman province of Asia was Julius Proclus Quintilianus. Under this province was included Mysia, in which was Lampsacus.

"that all the Christiaus should abandon their superstition, and recognise the king at whose feet the world really lay, and worship his gods." His refusal to sacrifice to the gods when bidden was met with threats of torture. As he persisted in his obstinacy, the proconsul ordered him to be cudgelled. Then he was extended on the rack; but he said, "The cudgels and the iron claws and the fire pain me not." The proconsul finally ordered him to be stoned. His death took place on May 14, 250.

The name of the proconsul is given as Optimus: now it is possible that this is the name of the successor of Quintilianus, of whom we read in the 'Acta Pionii,' since the new proconsul was expected to arrive in his province by the end of April, and there was quite sufficient time between March 12, the date of the death of Pionius, and May 14, when Maximus died, for the governorship of the province to change hands. With the exception of this point, which contains a doubtful but possible element of truth, there is so very little local colouring, and such an absence of any detail in the narration, that it is impossible to attach to it any real value. We shall lose nothing by being very sceptical in our attitude towards it. The only point wherein lies any

interest is the fragment of the edict which we have quoted; it is possible that it may be based on some manuscript edition extant at the time of the composition of the *Acta*. If we allow that a certain Maximus died on May 14, he must have died either at Lampsacus or at Troas, with several others whose *Acta* we will next consider.

(iii) *Acta Petri, Pauli, Andreæ, Dionysiae*.¹—Peter, a native of Lampsacus, was arraigned before the proconsul on the charge of being a Christian. He admitted that he knew of the edict, and had wilfully neglected its requirements, and now refused to obey the proconsul's command to sacrifice to Venus. The youth was ordered to be fastened with iron chains and broken on the wheel, and was finally beheaded.

The proconsul next hurried off to Troas, where Paul, Andrew, and Nicomachus were arraigned before him. He ordered them to sacrifice to the gods according to the requirements of the edict. Nicomachus obeyed, and Dionysia, a girl of sixteen, seeing his weakness, bewailed it loudly. She was delivered over to two young men to work their will upon her, but she was preserved by a miracle from any harm. Peter and Paul had been remanded to prison for the night, but

¹ Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*, p. 147.

on the following day two priests of Diana incited the people to demand that they should be brought forward again. Ordered to sacrifice to Diana, they resolutely refused. The proconsul, seeing that persuasion was useless, ordered them to be beaten and handed over to the mob to be stoned ; they were dragged out of the city and martyred outside the gate. On hearing this, Dionysia, who had miraculously escaped, ran out of the city to them, and fell on their bodies, desiring to die with them ; she was finally beheaded at the command of the proconsul. The day of martyrdom of all these was May 14 ; but the proconsul must have annihilated space to be able to preside at the trial of Peter at Lampsacus and Paul and Andrew at Troas on the same day. There is more local colouring in this narrative than in the last ; mention is made of the worship of Diana, and we have the names of the two priests Onesicrates and Macedo, which latter, however, may be fictitious for all we can tell. Again, the punishment of death by stoning is such as we might expect in these parts, as a concession to the frenzied oriental mob, which, as in the case of Polycarp, was always eager to lend assistance on such occasions. There is, however, nothing in the story which points to any contem-

porary tradition, or which gives us any deeper knowledge of the persecution than we had before.

(iv) *Acta Luciani et Martiani.*¹—At Nicomedia, in Bithynia, these two Christians were dragged before Sabinus the governor. He bade them obey him, and sacrifice in accordance with the edict, lest he should be compelled to torture them with unknown refinements of cruelty. He displayed the utmost patience, but finally ordered them to be burnt. Their death occurred on October 25, 250. We can learn little from this story beyond the name of a fifth contemporary governor in Bithynia,² which does not increase our confidence in its authenticity.

(v) *Acta Nestoris.*³—Nestor was Bishop of Sida in Pamphylia. Epolius, who held from Decius the position of administrator of the persecution in Lycia, Pamphylia, and Phrygia,⁴ was proceeding on a tour of investigation through his district, when the name of Nestor was brought before him

¹ Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*, p. 151.

² Aubé, p. 172.

³ A. S., February, vol. iii. p. 629. Aubé gives a copy of the *Acta* in Greek, which he discovered in the National Library at Paris.

⁴ It is interesting to note that Martianus (see above, p. 235, note 2) was given the administration of the district which Epolius now holds.

by a *delator*. An irenarch¹ was sent to fetch the bishop to Epolius at Perga. An earthquake ensued, and a voice from heaven said to Nestor (as to Polycarp a hundred years before), "Be strong and quit thyself like a man." Charged with refusing to sacrifice and blaspheming the emperor, he defended himself at length in answer to the questions put. After being tortured, he was finally suspended in such a way as to cause a lingering death. The martyrologies assign his death to February 251.

This is an interesting document, and, with the exception of the impossible story of the presence of Decius at Ephesus (which occurs also in the "Seven Sleepers"), contains much that is worthy of attention. Epolius, the administrator, holds the same office as that held by Martianus in the case of Achatius, which is not very different from that of Polemo in the 'Acta Pionii,' or of the *frumentarius* who arrested Dionysius of Alexandria.

It would be useless to attempt to discriminate between history and legend in the stories of the soldier Polyeuctes in Armenia, or of the "Seven

¹ An inferior and little-trusted prefect of police (Allard, p. 302).

Sleepers" at Ephesus,¹ or of Thrysus, Lucius, and Callinicus in Bithynia,² while it is unnecessary to do more than mention³ the legends of the sufferings of Quadratus⁴ and others at Corinth, of the Cretan bishop Cyril⁵ and ten disciples at Gortyna,⁶ and of Isidore in Chios. The extraordinary character of the narrative not infrequently causes us to doubt whether even the names that remain are anything more than the productions of medieval fiction-writers.

We have left to the last the discussion of the 'Acta Pionii' in order to give a full account of them, since in our opinion they are the best supported of all those connected with our period, and the most nearly contemporary with it. Eusebius⁷ relates that he read them at the same time as the letter to the Church of Philomelium from that of Smyrna, describing the martyrdom of Polycarp; but when he says that the events recorded in them were contemporaneous with the death of Polycarp, we question his

¹ Given by the Metaphrast, in Migne's Patrology.

² A. S., January, vol. ii. p. 808. ³ Cf. Allard, p. 369.

⁴ Quadratus, Dionysius, Cyprianus, Paulus, and their *socii* (A. S., March, vol. ii. p. 698), and Leonides and several women (A. S., March, vol. ii. p. 699).

⁵ Sarius, V. S., vol. vii. p. 155.

⁶ Sarius, V. S., vol. xii. p. 305.

⁷ Eus., H. E., 4. 15, § 46.

assertion, and ask whether it was not because they were all in the same book that he thoughtlessly attributed them to the same period. He writes: "And in the same book that contains the record of his sufferings I found also other Acts of Martyrs belonging to Smyrna, and of the same period as Polycarp, and with these martyrs there suffered also one Metrodorus, who would seem to have been a presbyter of the Marcionite heresy. The most notable martyr at that time, I would have you know, was recognised to be one Pionius, the record of whose acts contains in the fullest manner his various confessions and his boldness in proclaiming the Word of God, his defence of the faith in public before the judges, his public speeches of instruction, above all his generous attitude towards those who had yielded to temptation in the persecution, the consolations he offered to the brethren who visited him in prison, also the tortures and anguish that he endured, his constancy when nailed to the stake and burnt, and especially his remarkable death: any who wish to read of these doings I will refer to the record itself, which is arranged among the other *Acta* brought before my notice. There are also the memorials of others who suffered at Pergamum,

Carpus, Papylus, and Agathonice, gloriously consummating their martyrdom after illustrious confession."

This notice of the 'Acts of Pionius' shows with the utmost clearness that Eusebius had read a narrative of his sufferings tallying in every recorded detail with the story which we possess. Pionius was burnt to death, and Metrodorus suffered death at his side. Further, those who were martyred at Pergamum suffered in the reign of Decius, as is clear from the Greek 'Acta Carpi et Papyli' which M. Aubé gives at the end of his work. The 'Chronicon Paschale'¹ shall also bear witness: "And [in the reign of Decius] Pionius with many others was martyred at Smyrna. He was a man of high repute, and recognised as one of the most learned adherents of the Christian faith. He died under Julius Proclus Quintilianus, proconsul of Asia, on the twelfth day of March, the Sabbath day, at the tenth hour." Thus we have strong external evidence on both sides, but the internal evidence of the Acta will be entirely on the side of the later date.

Bishop Lightfoot says of the Acta:² "The

¹ Chronicon Paschale, Ol. 258, in Migne's Patrology.

² Lightfoot, Ap. Fathers; Polycarp, vol. i. p. 716 ff.

characteristics of the age of Decius (the prominence of the sects, for example) seem to me to be woven into the very texture of these Acts; and I cannot conceive any scheme of interpolation which would bring them into harmony with the times of Marcus Aurelius, and yet preserve anything worth preserving."

The 'Acta Pionii' are the work of a writer whose mind was saturated with the language of the two accounts of the martyrdom of Polycarp: from this we may conclude, either that the Polycarp records and the 'Acta Pionii' are both of Smyrnæan origin, and breathe equally the Smyrnæan idiom, or, on the other hand, that the 'Acta Pionii' were the work of one who held in high honour the Polycarp records, and desired to assimilate to them as closely as possible the history of so worthy a follower. As this would be more likely to occur when the Polycarp records had attained some veneration in the local church through their age than at the time of the events they relate, and as the 'Acta Pionii' preserve too much local colouring to have been written very long after the martyrdom of Pionius, unless they are a clever medieval fiction — which possibility is precluded by the fact that Eusebius read them in the early part

of the fourth century—we may judge that the tradition is very nearly, if not absolutely, contemporaneous with the actual events. The Greek of these *Acta*, which is to be found in a MS. of the twelfth century in the Library of St Mark's at Venice, we have transcribed, and have made a most careful comparison of its language and style with the Greek of the Polycarp records, with the result above mentioned—words, phrases, and idioms occurring constantly in each work which recall similar features in the other.¹

The long discourses which Pionius makes to the people in the *agora*, containing a lively denunciation of the Jews, and to the Christians in the prison, when he expounds the story of Saul and the witch of Endor, are regarded by some as proof of the non-authenticity of the *Acta*; but there are few who would imagine that these speeches claim to do more than represent the substance of what Pionius said on the various occasions, while the miraculous withering of the

¹ Appendix B of this chapter. This is the first time, so far as we know, that the Greek of the ‘*Acta Pionii*’ has been brought to this country. Bishop Lightfoot’s extracts are borrowed from Dr Gebhardt’s copy.

hand of the soldier who struck Pionius need cause no more difficulty than the account of the voice which spoke to Polycarp from heaven. It is not our object to prove the absolute genuineness of every sentence in the *Acta* so much as to demonstrate the probability that the Greek MS. at Venice is the direct descendant of the copy which Eusebius saw. It is almost certain that the original copy was in Greek, for the current language of Smyrna was Greek, and the fact is specially noticed that the proconsul read the sentence of Pionius in Latin, as an official pronouncement: again, Pionius in his speech makes reference to Greek men of renown, such as Aristides, Socrates, and Anaxarchus, who would only be of interest to a Greek-speaking people. We must remember, further, that the externals of paganism were to a great extent forgotten in the cities of Asia Minor even in the time of Julian, who revived it in Troy;¹ hence we should not expect the accurate knowledge here shown, from one who was merely composing a story at a later date than the fourth century. The bishop, Euctemon, apostatises and throws all his weight into the anti-Christian scale; he approaches the altar

¹ For this fact I am indebted to Professor Ramsay.

with a garland,¹ and swears by the fortune of the emperor that he is not a Christian; the scene occurs in the temple of the Nemeseis,² whose names were intimately connected with Smyrnæan worship, and by appealing to whom the bishop confirms his oath. The mention of the oath taken by the fortune of the emperor reminds us of the fact that Smyrna was a chief centre of the political cult—*i.e.*, of the worship of Rome, of the Senate, and of the emperor; “in no region did the worship of the living emperor assume such gigantic proportions as in Asia Minor.”³ Lastly, the *Acta* display with the utmost clearness the difference between the preliminary examination of suspects and the official trial before the proconsul, and in the case of the first we read that Pionius distinctly denied the right of the “temple-master,” Polemo, to inflict corporal punishment or torture, and was, according to law, remanded to prison until the arrival of the proconsul.

¹ Cf. Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 2: “*Impium velamen, quo velabatur sacrificantium capita captiva.*”

² Cf. Corpus Inscrr. Græc., 3163: ἐγκατοχήσαντα τὰ κυρίως Σαράπιδι παρὰ ταῖς Νεμέσεσιν ἐν Σμύρνῃ. Papirius, 211 A.D.

³ Lightfoot, *Ap. Fathers*, Part ii. vol. i. pp. 460-467. “In the pagan revival Smyrna seems to have borne a conspicuous part. Coins and inscriptions give evidence more particularly of the progress of the Roman State-worship during this period.”

We have produced sufficient instances of the truthfulness of the narrative to show that it is either a series of surprisingly shrewd guesses at the truth for an uncritical age, or else an authentic record, which deserves careful attention at the hands of any student of the *Acta* of this period. We append a translation of such portions of the ‘*Acta Pionii*’¹ as are of general value and historic interest:—

“We ought more particularly to make remembrance of the martyr Pionius, because when he was alive he turned many souls from error, being the most apostolic man of our times, and when at last he was martyred he left for our admonition this document to preserve his teaching.

“On the 23rd of February, the feast day of our blessed martyr Polycarp,² while the persecution ordered by Decius was running its course, Pionius, a presbyter, and Sabina, who was afterwards a confessor, were arrested, as well as Asclepiades, Macedonia, and Limnus, a presbyter of the Catholic Church. Pionius knew on the previous day that they would be arrested on the

¹ Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*. Our translations are from the Greek of the Venice MS.

² We give the day, February 23, as fixed by Bishop Lightfoot.

morrow, and while keeping vigil with Sabina and Asclepiades he fastened a chain round the neck of each one of them and remained indoors: this was done to prevent any one's thinking that they were about to follow the example of so many others by eating of the sacrificial food, and to show that they had decided to go to prison at once. After they had prayed and taken holy bread and water on the Sabbath-day, Polemo, the temple-master, presented himself with the others whose business it was to seek out the Christians, and compel them to sacrifice and join in the sacrificial feast, saying, 'Ye are full well aware of the imperial edict ordering you to sacrifice to the gods.' Pionius replied, 'We are aware of the divine commandment ordering us to worship God alone.' Polemo answered, 'Come to the *agora* and obey.' But Sabina and Asclepiades said, 'We obey a living God.' So he took them with him without force; but the people saw them and collected in great numbers at the unexpected sight, jostling one another greatly. When they reached the *agora* and were made to stand in the eastern portico with the two gates,¹ the whole *agora* was crowded, and

¹ This giving of detail would, if true, imply accurate local knowledge: the spot has not yet been identified at Smyrna.

the spaces above the portico were filled with Greeks and women and Jews, for it was a high Sabbath and they were keeping holiday. And they climbed upon the stands and boxes that lay there to get a better view. Then when they were set in the midst, Polemo began: 'It were good for you and your friends, Pionius, to obey like every one else and save me from having to punish you.' But Pionius stretched out his hand and with radiant visage made his defence, addressing himself to the Greek-speaking inhabitants of Smyrna and to the Jews present before him. He reproved them for their delight in the apostasy of his fellow-Christians who had fallen. He asked whether he and his were being punished for their good or for their evil deeds, and pointed out that judgment was in the world, and because of the greater judgment yet to come they could not obey the command to sacrifice. Every one listened intently, and Pionius repeated that the Christians did not worship the State gods or bow down to the golden image. Then they led them out into the open air, and Polemo and others surrounded them, and entreated Pionius to comply for love of them, because he was an honourable man who deserved to live; but he constantly affirmed that he looked for

far more than they could ever give. Then one of the bystanders, an idle fellow named Alexander, said, ‘Listen to me, Pionius.’ But Pionius said, ‘You should rather listen to me; for what you know, I know, but I have learning of which you are ignorant’: but Alexander laughed at him, and, pointing to his chains, said scornfully, ‘And what are they for?’ Pionius explained why he had put them on, to show that he and his friends had no intention of sacrificing, but were ready to go to prison at once, and thus silenced Alexander. The people again besought him to reconsider his decision, but he said, ‘We have made up our minds,’ and warned them of things to come, when Alexander again broke in with, ‘What is the good of your talking about these things, since you must die so soon ?’”

The people were auxious to assemble in the theatre to hear more from him; but some of the friends of the mayor warned Polemo to forbid him to speak there, lest there should be an uproar and a demand for a public distribution of bread.¹ So Polemo said, “If you will not offer, come at any rate to the temple of the Nemeseis.” But Pionius answered, “It would

¹ This reminds us of Juvenal’s ‘panem et circenses’ (*Satire x.* 81).

be better for your idols that we should not." Polemo said, "Do listen to us, Pionins," but he replied, "I would I could make you listen to me, and become Christians." His words were met with a loud laugh, "You can't make us be burnt alive." "No," said Pionius, "but it is far worse to be burnt after death." Sabina, who smiled at the remark of Pionius, was then threatened with a degrading fate, but said, "The holy God will see to that." Then Polemo turned again to Pionius and said, "Obey the order, Pionius;" but he replied, "Your orders are either to persuade or to punish; you won't persuade me, therefore punish me." Then followed a dialogue between Polemo and Pionius, in which the latter again declared his faith in Christ. Polemo then asked him to sacrifice to the emperor, but Pionius said, "I am a Christian and cannot sacrifice to a man." There follows a detailed account of the examination of Pionius, Sabina, and Asclepiades, one by one, which the clerk took down in writing. Sabina, it would appear, had been ill-treated by her mistress some years before, in the reign of Gordian, and had been left out on the mountains to die, but was rescued, and had since lived in the house of Pionius. The examination over, they were taken back to prison, followed by a

huge crowd which filled the *agora*, and mocked the prisoners as they went. One of the crowd shouted, "If they won't sacrifice, punish them;" but Polemo answered that he had not the authority. Some one, seeing Asclepiades, said, "Look, the little fellow is going to sacrifice;" but Pionius, hearing it, contradicted the statement. Others again said, "So-and-so has sacrificed;" but Pionius replied, "Every man makes his own choice. I cannot help what they do, but I choose for Pionius;" and then hearing some one say, "Think of a man so well educated coming to this!" he said, "Yes, you know enough about that, by reason of the deaths and other troubles in which you have learnt to know me." And some one else said, "You were hungry too when we were;" and he replied, "Yes, but I trusted in God." The procession was so encompassed by the mob that they were hardly able to keep the prisoners from being stifled and hand them over to the jailers. On arriving, they found Limnus the presbyter, and Macedonia, a woman of Carinè, and a member of the sect of the Phrygians, Eutychianus by name. While they were in prison the keepers of the prison noticed that Pionius and his friends did not receive the customary presents from the faithful; for Pionius

had said, “When our needs were greater we were a burden to no man; why should we be so now?” The keepers were angry, because they were usually well treated by visitors, and they cast the prisoners into the inner ward to prevent their having the company they might desire. Then they glorified God, and paid Him their customary worship, and the keepers repented of their harshness, and brought them out again into the front part of the prison; and they were continually praising God for His goodness in the present visitation, for now they might speak of Him and pray to Him as they would. And all the time they were in prison the heathen came in large numbers to persuade them to sacrifice, and went away astonished at their answers: they were joined also by all the Christiaus who had been forcibly haled to prison, and these made hourly lamentation, more particularly over the cautious people and those in high positions who had forsaken their faith. Pionius, who joined in their regret, made in the prison his second great speech, lamenting over the desolation of the Church, its sinfulness and unfaithfulness. He referred to the Jewish perversion of the Resurrection, by which it was made merely the work of necromancy, and illustrating his argument by

the story of the witch of Endor, who professed to call up the spirit of Samuel, he disproved the assertion that it was due to the agency of man or evil spirits ; and closed his speech with an entreaty to the *lapsi* to return to the God whom they had forsaken. At the conclusion of the speech, Polemo and another official, Theophilus, arrived with the news that the bishop Euctemon had sacrificed, and that he and Lepidus, probably a prominent heathen official, were anxious for Pionius to join them in sacrificing at the Nemeseum. Pionius replied that prisoners had the right to be reserved for trial until the arrival of the proconsul, saying, “ Why do you usurp his functions ? ” They retired for a short time, and then returned, hoping to move him by guile, saying that the proconsul wished to see him at Ephesus. Pionius said, “ Let his messenger come and fetch us, then.” Thereupon Theophilus took the matter into his own hands, and with great violence handed him over to an inferior officer, nearly strangling him the while. Thus all of them, resisting as stoutly as they could, and throwing themselves on the ground to prevent their being taken to the temple, came to the *agora*. It took six men to overpower Pionius, who struggled with the greatest vehemence ; the

prisoners were finally placed on the ground before the altar, where stood Euctemon and Lepidus, ready for the sacrifice. Lepidus began, “Why do you not sacrifice, Pionius ?” His whole company cried out in answer, “We are Christians.” The inquiry was continued, amid the amusement of the bystanders and the growing anger of Lepidus. Rufinus, a rhetorician, tried to out-argue Pionius, but was himself silenced. Finally, as argument was of no avail, they put garlands upon the heads of the Christians, who immediately tore them off and threw them on the ground. The priest drew near with the sacrificial food ; but he did not dare to approach them, and finally ate it himself in the sight of all. The officers could not decide what to do with the prisoners, and therefore sent them back to the prison, while the mob mocked and pelted them, hurling taunts at them as they passed along. As Pionius was entering the prison, one of the guards struck him on the side of the head, and immediately this man’s arms and chest were miraculously covered with swellings, so that he could hardly breathe. On entering their place of confinement again, they gave thanks to God that their faith had not failed, and that they had not been misled by the arch-hypocrite Euctemon,

and comforted one another with psalms and prayers.

They heard later that it was Euctemon who had desired that they should thus be subjected to pressure, and that he himself had brought the victim to the Nemeseum, and wished to take home again what remained of it. His treasonable conduct exposed him to utter ridicule, because he put a garland on his head and swore by the fortune of the emperor that he was not a Christian, and had not omitted, as the others had done, any act that could prove his loyalty to paganism.

[*Note.*—The document left by Pionius ends here: the remainder of the account is taken from the official “Acta Proconsularia.”]

In the course of time the proconsul arrived at Smyrna, and Pionius was brought before him. The proconsul took his seat on the *Bema*, and inquired at length into the position and belief of Pionius, treating him at first very mildly. Afterwards he was put on the rack and torn with iron claws. When the proconsul had done his best to persuade him, but without effect, he caused to be read¹ in Latin the sentence, “Pionius

¹ This is another small piece of evidence of antiquity: for cf. Tert., Apol., ii.: “Quid ex tabella recitatis illum?”

confesses that he is a Christian, and we order him to be burnt alive." They then proceeded to the racecourse,¹ and Pionius hastened to divest himself of his garments in the presence of the *commentarius*. "Regarding the comeliness of his person, he was filled with joy and looked up to heaven, and gave thanks that he had been preserved in the purity of the faith. He then raised himself upon the wooden stand, and let the soldier fasten the nails. When he had been thus fastened firmly, the opportunity of renouncing his faith was once again given him, but he answered that his desire was to die soon that he might rise again the sooner. After this they set beside him one Metrodorus, a presbyter of the Marcionite sect: now Pionius was on the right, and Metrodorus on the left, and their faces were turned towards the east. Wood and other stuff was piled up around them, and Pionius closed his eyes, so that the people thought he had fainted; but he was praying silently, and having reached the end of his prayer, he opened his eyes, and said 'Amen,' his face radiant all the while the fire was rising about him: at last, with the words, 'Lord, receive my soul,' he died peacefully and

¹ Cf. the first examination of Aurelius. Cyprian, Ep. 38 (H., p. 580, 5): "Quando vicit in *cursu*."

painlessly. And thus he gave up his spirit to the Father, who has promised to guard every soul unjustly condemned."

[*Note*.—From this point to the close the remarks are made by the compiler of the Acts.]

"Such was the end of the blameless and incorruptible life of the blessed Pionius, whose mind was always intent upon God the Omnipotent, and our Lord the Mediator between God and man. Such was the end of which he was counted worthy, and after victory in the great fight he passed through the narrow gate into the broad realms of day.

"His right to the martyr's crown was attested by his body as well; for after the fire was put out, we, who were by, saw that it was like the well-cared-for body of a lusty athlete; the hair on his head and cheeks was not singed; and on his face there shone a wondrous radiance, which strengthened the Christians in their faith, while the unbelievers trembled and were terror-stricken by their guilty conscience.

"This took place when Julius Proclus Quintilianus was proconsul of Asia, in the second consulship of Gaius ¹ Messius Quintus Trajanus Decius

¹ We have adopted Bishop Lightfoot's restoration of the date: he had access to a few passages of the Greek MS., supplied by Dr O. von Gebhardt.

Augustus, and [in the first] of Vettius Gratus, on the twelfth day of March by the Roman reckoning, and on the nineteenth day of the sixth month according to the reckoning of Asia, at the tenth hour; but in our calculation, in the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

At this point the 'Acta Pionii' end: it seems highly probable that they were written by a Smyrnæan,¹ considering the local knowledge displayed in them; the date of the events recorded is 250 A.D., and the month would be the last but one of the administration of Quintilianus. He would probably remain in office sufficiently long to try, and to sentence to death by burning, Carpus, Papylius, and Agathonice, about April 11, 250, at Pergamum. From the 'Acta Maximi' we are led to believe that he was succeeded in the proconsulate by Optimus. The Acta of Carpus and Papylius are only remarkable as containing a curious eucharistic formula, which we append, resembling closely one in the 'Martyrdom of Polycarp' (§ 14): "'Blessed art Thou, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, for that Thou didst deem a

¹ The repeated reference to the intense hostility of the Jews is very characteristic of Smyrna, as in Rev. ii. 8. Cf. also Tert., Scorp., 1: "Synagoges Judæorum, fontes persecutionum."

sinner such as I am worthy of this lot with Thee.' And a woman, Agathonice by name, lifted up her voice, saying, 'This banquet has been made ready for me; I must partake of this glorious banquet.'"

The 'Acta Martyrum' have now yielded up their wealth of tradition: for the most part we could have spared them, so far as history is concerned. The smaller proportion we are glad to read in the light of such historical knowledge of the times as we possess: without Cyprian and without Eusebius they would be but sorry guides for one who attempted to penetrate the darkness of the Decian period.

APPENDIX A.

ON THE BASES OF THE 'ACTA SANCTORUM.'

NEUMANN (Der römische Staat, p. 277) has some interesting remarks.

(a) The Acta were based on the official records of the proceedings. Cf. Dig., 26. 8. 21: "Acta facta sunt apud procuratorem Cæsaris."

(b) A shorthand reporter followed the details of the transaction. Cf. Dig., 4. 6. 33. 1. "Eos qui notis scribunt acta præsidum." [And 'Acta Pionii': *γράφοντος τοῦ νοταρίου πάντα.*]

(c) These Acta were drawn up after criminal, as well as civil, proceedings. Cod., 2. 1. 2, Impp. Severus et Antoninus Augusti Fausto (A.D. 194): "Acta publica tam criminalia quam civilia exhiberi inspicienda."

These came into the hands of the Christian writers in some way or other, for cf. a contemporary letter of Dionysius of Alexandria (Eus., 7. 11. 6), who relates the proceedings in the persecution of Valerian before the prefect of Egypt: *αὐτῶν δὲ ἐπακούσατε τῶν ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων λεχθέντων ὡς ὑπεμνηματίσθη.* [And 'Acta Pionii': *ἐμαρτύρησε γενομένων ὑπομνημάτων τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων.*]

Again (Cyprian, Ep. 77, § 2), Nemesianus writes that Cyprian, “*apud acta proconsulis*,” set an example which his disciples should follow.

APPENDIX B.

LINGUISTIC RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN ‘ACTA PIONII’ AND
THE TWO SMYRNÆAN RECORDS OF POLYCARP.

PIONIUS.

ἀποστολικὸς ἀνὴρ τῶν καθ'
ἡμᾶς γενόμενος.

ἐνισταμένου σαββάτου μεγά-
λου.

ἐπέστη αὐτοῖς Πολέμων.

ἀναζητεῖν.

φαιδρῷ τῷ προσώπῳ ἀπελο-
γήσατο.

μήτε βιασθέντες ἑαυτοῖς ἥλ-
θον ἀλλὰ ζητοῦσιν ἐπιθῆσαι.

ὡς μηδὲ γρύξαι τινα.

ἐκλιπαροῦντες.

ἐπιθέειν.

POLYCARP.

Eus., 4. 15: ἐν τοῖς καθ'
ἡμᾶς χρόνοις διδάσκαλος ἀποσ-
τολικὸς γενόμενος ἐπίσκοπος τῆς
ἐν Σμύρνῃ καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας.

Eus., 4. 15: ὅντος σαββάτου
μεγάλου.

Mart. Pol., § 6: ἐπέστησαν
οἱ ζητοῦντες ἀντὸν.

M.P. and Eus., 4. 15: ἀνα-
ζητεῖν.

M. P. and Eus., 4. 15: φαι-
δρῷ προσώπῳ διελέξατο.

M. P., § 4: δὲ παραβιασά-
μενός ἑαυτὸν τε καὶ τινας προσ-
ελθεῖν ἐκόντας.

M.P., § 2: ὤστε μήτε γρύ-
ξαι τινά (of one tortured).

M. P., § 4: πολλὰ ἐκλιπαρή-
σαντες.

M. P., § 4: ἐπιθῆσαι.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ἐπίθυσον οὖν καὶ τῷ αὐτοκράτορι. | M. P., § 10 : σὲ μὴν καὶ λόγου ἡξίωσα. |
| δῆπαρχος μετὰ διωγμάτων. | M. P., § 7 : διωγμῖται καὶ ἵππεῖς. |
| ἀκόλουθον ἐστιν. | Eus., 4. 15 : ἀκόλουθον ἦν. |
| θεοσέβειαν αἰδέσθητε. | Eus., 4. 15 : αἰδέσθητε τὴν ἡλικίαν. |
| κενοδοξεῖν. | Eus., 4. 15, and M. P. : κενοδοξεῖν. |
| οὗτος καὶ τὸν ἄλλους ἀναστοβεῖ ἵνα μὴ θύσωσιν. | Eus., 4. 15 : δ πολλοὺς διδάσκων μὴ θύειν μηδὲ προσκυνέων. |
| δ τότε ἐπιτελῶν τὰ κυνήγια. | Eus., 4. 15 : ἐπιτελεῖν ἡμέραν γενέθλιον. κυνηγέσια πληροῦν. |
| προσαχθεὶς δ Πίονιος. | M. P., § 9 : προσαχθέντος αὐτοῦ. |
| οὐ τῷ ἀέρι προσέχω. | M. P., § 2 : προσέχειν τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ χάριτι. |
| οἱ ἀπογραφόμενοι . . . πρὸς τὰ θηρία. | M. P., § 2 : οἱ εἰς τὰ θηρία κριθέντες. |
| Πιόνιον ἔαυτὸν δμολογήσαντα ἔναι χριστιανὸν. | Eus., 4. 15 : Πολύκαρπος ὀμολόγησεν ἔαυτὸν χριστιανὸν ἔναι. |
| ζῶντα καῆγαι. | M. P., § 5 : δεῖ με ζῶντα καῆγαι. |
| ἀπελθόντος εἰς τὸ στάδιον. | Eus., 4. 15 : ἀγόμενος εἰς τὸ στάδιον. |
| When about to die—ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ εὐχαριστήσας, ἥπλωσεν ἔαυτον. | M. P., § 14 : ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἶπεν, Κύριε, . . . εὐλογῶ σε. |
| καθηλωθέντι δὲ αὐτῷ. | Eus., 4. 15 : οὐ καθήλωσαν. |
| κατηξιώθη τοῦ τέλους. | Eus., 4. 15, and M. P. : ἡξίωσας με τῆς ἡμέρας. |

It is interesting to observe that, of all the resemblances here noted, only one, and that one

rather of idea than of form, occurs in the two long speeches by Pionius which are attacked as the weak points of the Ponian document. It is quite possible, as we said above, that they are additions of a later date.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHURCH UNDER GALLUS.

ELECTION OF CORNELIUS AS BISHOP OF ROME—RELIEF AT THE CESATION OF THE PERSECUTION NOT CONFINED TO THE CHURCH—GALLUS BECOMES EMPEROR—THE PLAGUE BEGINS—IN AFRICA—IN EGYPT—GENERAL SACRIFICE ORDERED—BISHOPS PROSCRIBED—SPEEDY RESTORATION OF THE PENITENT “LAPSI” IN VIEW OF PERSECUTION—COMPARISON OF THE CHURCH IN 252 WITH ITS STATE IN 250—SMALL IMPORTANCE OF PERSECUTION UNDER GALLUS—CYPRIAN, CORNELIUS, IN THE PERSECUTION—CYPRIAN’S ESTIMATE OF THE PERSECUTION—DEATH OF CORNELIUS—HIS BURIAL—LUCIUS SUCCEEDS HIM—GOES INTO EXILE—DEATH OF GALLUS, AND ACCESSION OF EMILIANUS—ACCESSION OF VALERIAN AND GALLIENUS—THEIR PEACEFUL ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY—RETURN OF LUCIUS—THE CHURCH HAS REST.

APPENDIX. ON THE TECHNICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN “MARTYR” AND “CONFESSOR” IN THE WRITINGS OF CYPRIAN, AND ITS RELATION TO CORNELIUS AND LUCIUS.

THE election of Cornelius to the vacant see of Rome in March 251 was the token of returning peace: the news of the lack of energy displayed at headquarters made its way speedily throughout

the empire, and the wearied combatants in both camps gladly laid aside their armour. A course of aggression, set on foot too late to arouse a sympathetic interest among the spectators, and supported by no burning fanaticism in the local administrators, could not expect to meet with success. It is not when men are driven forward by a stern bureaucracy that a world-wide organism is moved, but when deep-seated convictions and firmly rooted beliefs hurry society involuntarily onward, calling for instant righting of the wrong. But in the time of Decius no such movement of universal feeling existed, and the execution of the edict appealed merely to the lower instincts of oriental mobs. Hence there arose a general sigh of relief, not from Christians only, but from the pagan world at large, when, in obedience to no imperial proclamation but by her own tacit decision, Rome refused to continue for a moment longer the revolting measures to which she had been driven. The prison gates were flung open, and the confessors restored to the world ; it was once more possible for the Church to meet in synod and to elect a bishop. The emperor was far away, surrounded by difficulties of sufficient magnitude to occupy his attention

for an indefinite period; no interference was to be anticipated from that quarter. General confidence gradually returned, as the public mind dwelt on the military successes of the previous year (250), and contemplated the probability of even greater results from the campaign of the approaching summer.

Sinister rumours began to reach Rome in June: messengers arrived who stated that Decius had allowed his army to be entrapped and almost annihilated among the Balkans, but that he was collecting his shattered forces and would speedily take the field. Then came the news that he had fallen, engulfed with his son in the marshes of Abrytus, and that the instrument of his defeat and of the Gothic triumph, who had been proclaimed emperor by the army early in September 251, was none other than Trebonianus Gallus, the governor of Mœsia.¹ The unprecedented disgrace which had fallen upon the

¹ Eusebius, Constant. Or. ad SS. coetum, 24: ήνίκα ἐν τοῖς Σκυθικοῖς πεδίοις πανστρατιῷ πεσὸν τὸ περιβόητον Ρωμαίων κράτος ἥγε τοῖς Γέταις εἰς καταφρόνησιν. Orosius, 7. 21; Zosimus, i. 23. Alexandrian coins (Gibbon, i. (ed. Bury) p. 250 and Sallet, Daten, p. 66 f.) show that the Decii died before August 29, 251. Chron. Pasc., Ol. 258: ἐσφάγη . . . ἀπό τινος τῶν ἔξαρχων ἐν Ἀβύρτῳ ὡς ἑτῶν ξ' (=60). Zonaras, 12. 20: Δέκιος

Roman arms through the death of a Roman emperor on Roman soil, at the hands of a barbarian foe, was accentuated by another surrender, when Gallus succeeded in bribing the Goths to retire across the frontier and act as a bulwark against the inroads of other nomadic hordes.

The prospect was indeed gloomy: Rome had bought peace from the Goths; barbarian tribes were attacking the cities in the north of Italy; in the far East, Syria was the objective of a Persian advance.¹ Yet in the general confusion the Church found peace, and the year 252 opened without any warning of trouble to come. But as Easter approached² there appeared another enemy, more difficult to contend against than any armed force, because intangible, attacking directly Christian and Pagan alike, and indirectly forming a basis for anti-Christian agi-

. . . οὐδὲ δύω ὅλους ἐνιαυτοὺς ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν Ρωμαίων ἀνύστα ἀρχῆ
αἰσχιστα διεφθάρη. δ δὲ Γάλλος ὑπέθετο τοῖς βαρβάροις, ἐπι-
βουλεύων Δεκίφ, πλησίον τέλματος βαθέος ὕντος, ἐκεῖ παρατά-
ξασθαι. They made a feigned retreat, and Decius followed them, and was by a manœuvre led into the morass and perished.

¹ Zosimus, 1. 27 : τῶν κρατούντων οὐδαμῶς οἵων τε ὕντων ἀμῦναι
τῷ πολιτεύματι.

² Eusebius, H. E., 7. 22 § 1 : λοιμικῆς τὸν πόλεμον διαλαβούσης
νόσου, τῆς τε ἔορτῆς πλησιαζούσης.

tation. This pestilence¹ carried off Hostilianus, the younger and only surviving son of the Emperor Decius, to the small regret of Gallus, who, for reasons of policy,—to conciliate the adherents and friends of Decius, and to divert attention from the ugly report which accused him of having betrayed his chief,—had associated him with himself as joint ruler, with slightly inferior powers,² but was now at liberty to elevate in his stead his own son Volusianus.³

The nature and extent of the pestilence will be better understood if we give some extracts from contemporary records. “After the bitter ravages of the persecution had swept over the people,⁴ the

¹ Orosius, 7. 22 : “Exeritur ultio violati nominis Christiani et usquequo ad profligandas ecclesias edicta Decii cucurrerunt, eatenus incredibilium morborum pestis extenditur : nulla fere provincia Romana, nulla civitas, nulla domus fuit, quæ non illa generali pestilentia correpta atque vacuata sit. Hac sola pernicie insignes, Gallus et Volusianus . . . occisi sunt. Zosimus, 1. 26 : οὐχ ἦττον δὲ τοῦ πανταχθεν ἐπιβρίσαντος πολέμου, καὶ δ λοιμὸς πόλεσι τε καὶ κώμαις ἐπιγενόμενος, εἴ τι λελειμμένον ἦν ἀνθρώπειον γένος διέφθειρεν, οὕτω πρότερον ἐν τοῖς φθάσασι χρόνοις τοπαύτην ἀνθρώπων ἀπώλειαν ἐργασάμενος.

² Dessau, Inser. Lat. Sel., 518, gives a semi-erased inscription with his full title, while there was found in Caria (Jour. of Hellen. Stud., ii. 1890, p. 127) a *κέραμος* with his name inscribed in Greek.

³ Gibbon, i. cf. 10.

⁴ Pontius, Cypriani Vita, §§ 8, 9 (H., p. xcvi).

crafty enemy, finding that he could not overthrow the entire Church by any single artifice, altered his tactics and laid low with a different weapon (*i.e.*, schism) any soldier who, in a moment of forgetfulness, displayed an unprotected flank." But the surreptitious enticements of schism found in Cyprian a ruthless enemy, both in exposing them and in healing the wounds they had caused. No less service did he render when "a few months later there broke out over a vast area a terrible plague and wasting disease, which seized with amazing suddenness upon countless cities day after day, and passed from house to house among the cowering populace. Panic seized mankind: in the desire to escape from the contagion, they fled from home, or, with a grievous lack of family affection, turned their sick into the streets, as though with the doomed and afflicted brother whom they expelled they could drive away the plague itself. In every street in the cities there were strewn not merely living bodies but the corpses of many more, which appealed for pity to those who moved among them, as they gazed on the fate that perhaps awaited themselves. No one had a thought save for sordid personal advantage. No one shuddered at the idea that his end might be similar to theirs. No one did for another what

he would have wished should be done for himself, had he been dying. It were shame to pass over the courageous acts of the chief priest of Christ and of God, whose affection for his fellow-men was as far superior to that of the priests of this world as was his religion to theirs. He assembled the people, and distributed among them the offerings of charity ; he pointed out by examples from the Scriptures the necessity of works of mercy to please God," and in every way strove to alleviate the sufferings of those whose lives were endangered by the dread visitant.

Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, writes¹ : " We and they had secured a brief interval of rest, when this plague swooped down upon us, a reality more alarming to the heathen than any rumoured trouble, and more revolting than any other calamity. As one of their own writers put it, 'It was the one thing which was too fatal to admit of hope.' It was not so to us, but none the less for all that did it exercise our faith and prove our constancy. For it did not by any means spare us, although for the most part it attacked the heathen. . . . The greatest number of our brethren, owing to their exceeding love and affection for one another, took no thought for themselves,

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 7. 21 (Dion. Alex. ad fratres, 6-10).

but held fast together, keeping watch over the sick and exposing themselves to danger, doing their service unto Christ ; and further, with the utmost cheerfulness they ministered to the heathen, because they felt full sympathy for the sufferings of others than their own people, although they often brought the plague on themselves from the sufferers whom they nursed. . . . The heathen acted very differently from the Christians : they put out of the house any who showed signs of illness, and fled from the side of those who were dearest to them ; they would cast them half dead into the streets, so that the corpses lay tumbled about and unburied, spreading abroad a fresh succession of disease, which it was difficult to escape even with the greatest precautions.”¹

The short respite² which the Church had enjoyed was brought to a speedy end by the plague, which broke out in March 252, and which called for an immediate expiatory sacrifice to the gods on behalf of the whole Roman empire. It was not advisable—in fact, in the circumstances, it was impossible—to proclaim a second general persecu-

¹ For further notice cf. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum*, §§ 5, 7.

² Cyprian, *De lapsis*, § 1 (H., p. 237, 2) : “Pax ecclesiae redita est.”

tion, and therefore it was decided to get rid of the bishops¹ as before, and to call upon the Christian as well as the pagan world, the former now deprived of its executive, to propitiate an angry heaven.² Dodwell, it would seem without reasonable grounds, held that the anti-Christian movement was merely the result of a proconsular edict, the operation of which did not extend beyond Italy; but we feel that the simultaneous attacks upon Cyprian at Carthage, and Cornelius (followed by that upon his successor, Lucius) at Rome, were part of a more widely extended plan. As early as the beginning of May it had become apparent that a new trial was awaiting the Church, and that she must gird herself for the struggle. With the object of strengthening the Christians to resist the coming attack, it was decided by the African bishops in council, under Cyprian's presidency³ (May 15, 252), that the rules of penance, which they had laid down in the preceding year, should for the time be relaxed. "We see," they write, "that a second season of

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 7. 1. Gallus made shipwreck on the same rock as Decius: *τοὺς ἱεροὺς ἄνδρας τοὺς περὶ τῆς εἰρήνης αὐτοῦ . . . πρεσβεύοντας πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἥλασεν.*

² Cyprian, Ep. 59 (H., p. 673, 15): "Sacrificia quæ edicto proposito celebrare populus jubebatur" (to Apollo Salutaris).

³ Cyprian, Ep. 57 (H., p. 651, 6) and Ep. 59 (H., p. 677, 20).

attack is drawing near, and are warned by repeated indications to arm ourselves and make ready for the conflict which is being thrust upon us, and therefore we must prepare by means of exhortation and advice the people committed to our charge, and gather within the camp of the Lord every soldier of Christ who is as yet without his arms but is eager for the fray. Under the pressure of this necessity, we have decided to give ‘peace’ and the means of defence to all who have not separated themselves from the Church, but since the day of their fall have never ceased to show true penitence and sorrow, and to ask pardon of God.”

The entire Epistle (57) breathes the same tone of foreboding: at the end we read, “We have been repeatedly warned by the mercy and providence of God that a day of conflict is at hand, that an angry foe is on the point of rising up against us, that a battle is at hand, far more anxious and severe than that which preceded it.” In writing his treatise, ‘*De mortalitate*’, Cyprian pitches his remarks in the same key, and shows that the pestilence is a means of saving many Christians from a painful or degrading end, rather than a ground for complaint, since

it attacks Christian and heathen alike,¹ and does not discriminate between the children of truth and the children of error.

It must have been with very hopeful feelings that Cyprian was able to await the outbreak of 252, as compared with that of January 250. The energetic and powerful tactician who then organised the attack was exchanged for a sovereign who had bought the purple by means of deliberate treachery and dragged it in the mire before the eyes of a horde of Goths. Decius, the darling of the army, the flatterer of the Senate, had entered upon the religious campaign with the moral support of both interests; Gallus was an adventurer, whose first act of administration had accentuated a Roman reverse, and sullied in a moment the age-long traditions of the army. Decius had carefully weighed the state of affairs, and determined on annihilating the whole Christian body: Gallus was driven to action by a natural calamity, and aimed merely at paralysing the executive. Lastly, the Church which now faced Gallus was a very different body from that on which Decius had laid so rude a hand; its whole system was reinvigorated and endowed

¹ Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, § 15.

with the vitality of health. The Church had learnt that laxity of life is not consistent with active warfare, and the effects of the lesson were visible half a century later in the resistance offered to Diocletian. It may well be doubted whether Christianity was ever called upon to endure a more damaging assault than was directed against it by Decius. Without sound discipline, without previous experience, the Church was challenged in 250 to face for the first time the concentrated onset of the powers of this world : all future ages, on the other hand, could look back to the example of that victory, and be guided by the bitter experience which had written the history of that year of discipline in letters of blood.

Thus it is that the persecution under Gallus has practically no place in the history of the Church. Dionysius of Alexandria relates with an almost pitying contempt¹ that Gallus had not sufficient prudence to avoid the dangers which had proved fatal to Decius, and consequently injured himself rather than Christianity. The silence of the Church historians, Jerome, Augustine, Orosius, Sulpicius Severus, and Lactantius, does not so

¹ Eusebius (H. E., 7. 1), Ep. ad Hermammonem. Cf. 7. 22. 12.

much support Dodwell's theory¹ of the limited area of the persecution as the probability of its utter want of success. We know from Cyprian and Dionysius that it extended over Italy, Africa, and Egypt, and we actually read² that "Gallus was a grievous foe to Christianity, arousing against it a no less fearful storm than Decius, and putting many to death," but this is without doubt an exaggerated statement, although it serves to show that the attack of Gallus was by no means contemptible.

We have no reason for believing that Origen, who died in the reign of Gallus, suffered any further assault upon his faith after the torture he endured under Decius. He died in his sixtieth year, probably in 253 A.D.³

Cyprian, who had defrauded the people of a gratifying spectacle by his absence in the earlier persecution, was again clamoured for in the amphitheatre⁴ by the mob, who longed to see him fight with the beasts: apparently he did

¹ Dr F. Görres, in F. X. Kraus, *Real-Encyclopädie*, p. 238, has not much difficulty in disposing of Dodwell's unnecessarily narrow estimate of the persecution under Gallus (*Dissert. Cypr.*, xi.)

² Zonaras, 12. 21.

³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, 7. 1.

⁴ Cyprian, Ep. 59 (*H.*, p. 673, 15): "His ipsis . . . diebus . . . ad leonem denuo postulatus in circō."

not withdraw as on the previous occasion, since he knew of the incident in the circus the very day it occurred, but the manner of his escape from death is hidden from us. We may conjecture that he was on friendly terms with the governor of the province, whose identity is possibly concealed under the name of Demetrianus, to whom he addressed a most fearless treatise on the injustice of the official attitude towards Christianity.

Cornelius, the Bishop of Rome, set a noble example to his Church, and confessed the faith boldly. He was then banished with certain others to Centumcellæ, where he received a letter of warm congratulation from Cyprian,¹ who writes: “Your people have given public proof of their admiration for the example which your brave conduct set them; and the brethren have shown their united spirit by following it to a man.”² Later on he draws attention to the remarkable way in which the *lapsi* had stood by the Church, proving that they had been quickened for the battle by the discipline of the penance they had endured. The whole of the letter

¹ Ep. 60, § 1. “Virtus vestra, confessio vestra”; and “Ducem te confessionis fratribus exstitisse.”

² Ep. 60, § 1 (H., p. 691).

breathes of hope,¹ and speaks of temptation resisted, of ranks unbroken. It is difficult to judge whether Cyprian does not make too much of the persecution; before the storm breaks he writes² to the Church at Thibaris: "You should know and regard it as certain that a day of trial is imminent and the time of Antichrist has arrived; we must all prepare for the battle, and think of naught save the glory of life eternal and the crown of the confession of the Lord; the things before us are not such as those that are past. A more trying, a more terrible assault is impending, and the soldiers of Christ should prepare for it with unflinching bravery, remembering that the reason why they drink from day to day of the cup of Christ's blood is to enable them to shed their own blood in Christ's service." Later on, recalling the object of the persecution, he writes:³ "Our adversary fell upon the camp of Christ, hoping to terrify it into submission; but fiercely as he came on, he was no less fiercely repelled, and the terror and fear he hoped to inspire he found neutralised by equal constancy and strength. He thought he could a second time wrestle down the servants of God, and overthrow them, like

¹ Ep. 60, § 2 (H., p. 693, 13 f.)

² Ep. 58 (H., p. 656, 17 ff.)

³ Ep. 60 (H., p. 692, 17 ff.)

raw recruits inexperienced and unprepared, with his ancient wiles. At first he set upon individuals, and attempted to withdraw them from the influence of the Church. An enemy whose strength is not sufficient to cope with the entire force will attempt to take advantage of the isolation of individuals. But his sharpest weapons fell blunted from the armour of faith and strength possessed by our united body: he learned that the soldiers of Christ were sober and watchful, and ready armed for battle; they could not be vanquished, because they knew how to die and had no fear of death; they offered no resistance to attack, because the innocent are forbidden to kill even the guilty, but without hesitation they laid down their lives that they might the more quickly pass from a world so grievously stricken with sin and anger. What a noble sight, what joy for the Church, to think that beneath the eye of God, in full sight of Christ, not a few stragglers, but the whole army to a man, advanced to meet the shock of battle."

While in exile at Centumcellæ, a coast town in Etruria, about forty miles distant from Rome, Cornelius died.¹ We have no reason to believe

¹ Episc. Urb. Catal., ex Chron. Lib., ed. Mommsen (R. A. Lipsius), p. 266: "Post hoc Centumcellis expulsus, ibi cum gloria dormitionem accepit."

that his end was hastened by any act of hostility on the part of the emperor. He was a man of considerable age when elected to the see of Rome, and the crisis, which was only passing away when he was appointed, gave way to the still more difficult and, for personal reasons, harassing situation, created by the opposition to his election by Novatian and his party. The persecution under Gallus, which followed almost immediately upon the vindication of his claims, and drove him into exile, may well have caused him disappointment, owing to the loss of a position which had cost him so severe a contest, and his anxiety for the Church which he was forced to leave in the hour of its need. His death occurred about the month of May 253, after two short years of nominal tenure of his office.¹ The commemoration of his *dies natalis* falls on September 14, the same day as that of Cyprian.² He was not buried in the same

¹ Jerome, De vir. ill., 66 (Cornelius) : “Rexit ecclesiam annis duobus sub Gallo et Volusiano cui ob Christum martyrio coronato successit Lucius.” Episc. Urb. Catal. (Lipsius), p. 266 : “Cornelius . . . a consul. Decio, IIII. [III. ?] et Decio II. [251] usque Gallo et Volusiano.”

² Cf. Duchesne, Lib. Pont., p. 11 (Dep. Martyr. in Cat. Lib.) : “xviii. Kal. Octob. Cypriani Africæ. Romæ celebratur in Calisti.” Martyrol. Hieronym. . “Romæ, via Appia, in cimiterio Calisti, Corneli episcopi . . . et in Africa, civitate Carthagine, natale sancti Cypriani episcopi.”

chamber as Fabianus or Lucius (who were buried in the “crypt of the popes”), but in the *praedium Lucinae*, which is close to the cemetery of Callistus. The inscription on his tombstone is in Latin characters, in contradistinction to that upon the tombstones of the other bishops in the “crypt of the popes,” and is as follows:—

CORNELIUS + MARTYR + EPI.

The official language of the Church was still Greek, but we may understand the reason for the change, and for his isolated place of burial, if we suppose that “his funeral was conducted by an old patrician family, having its own place of burial, and still clinging to the national language in preference to the new-fashioned Greek.”¹ It is quite impossible to decide whether his remains were brought from Etruria and deposited in this vault in 253, or later: we may suggest that the Cornelii were probably allowed to bring back the body of their honoured kinsman without delay, and deposit it in their own vault, thus regarding him rather as a member of their family than as one who could claim to be buried side by side with his predecessors in the Roman see.

¹ Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotteranea*, Pt. i. (1879) p. 355.

He was succeeded immediately by Lucius, who was no sooner made bishop than he was banished.¹ This further indication of anti-Christian policy was probably one of the last official acts of Gallus, as it was in this month that *Æmilianus*,² the governor of Moesia, after defending the empire successfully from a barbarian invasion which spread devastation throughout the Illyrian provinces, was proclaimed emperor by the soldiers. Gallus advanced against him with his son as far as Spoletium, where they were slain by their own troops, who had been persuaded to embrace the cause of *Æmilianus*.³

The new emperor was recognised by the Senate, and ushered in his reign auspiciously by driving the barbarian hordes back beyond the Danube. His attitude towards the Senate did not, however, satisfy the army, and he was deposed within three months of his accession.⁴

¹ Episc. Urb. Catal., p. 266: “Fuit temporibus Galli et Volusiani. . . . Hic exul fuit et postea nutu Dei incolumis ad ecclesiam reversus est.” Cf. Eusebius, H. E., 7. 2.

² Zonaras, 12. 21.

³ Orosius, 7. 22: “Gallus et Volusianus dum contra *Æmilianum* novis rebus studentem bellum civile moliuntur, occisi sunt.”

⁴ Orosius, *loc. cit.*, “*Æmilianum tamen tertio mense invasæ tyrannidis extinctus est.*”

Lucius, the Bishop of Rome, probably continued in exile during his reign, waiting for some indication of the emperor's attitude towards Christianity, but none was afforded, and it was left for Valerian to recall the exile, and to extend peace to the weary Church.

It was at some time before October 22, 253, that Valerian and Gallienus were recognised as Augusti (at any rate in Africa).¹ This was the fourth transference² of the imperial power that had occurred in as many years, and it was hoped that the new *régime*, which lasted until 261 A.D., would be marked by greater prosperity than was actually the case; but “the whole period,” writes Gibbon, “was one uninterrupted series of confusion and calamity.” The character of the first four years of the joint rule of Valerian and Gallienus was such as to restore confidence to the Church without delay. Dionysius writes

¹ An inscription in the province of Numidia (C.I.L., viii. 2482) relates that on October 22, 253 (marked by the second consulship of Volusianus), a legion erected a tablet PRO SAL. DD. NN. VALERIANI ET GALLIENI, at Gemellæ. Tillemont puts the death of Gallus in May 253.

² Eusebius, H. E., 7. 1: Δέκιον οὐδὲ δλον ἐπικρατήσαντα δυοῖν ἑτοῖν χρόνον . . . ἀμα τοῖς παισὶ κατασφαγέντα Γάλλος διαδέχεται. Orosius, 7. 22: “Gallus . . . regnum adeptus vix duabus annis cum Volusiano filio obtinuit.” Cf. Eusebius, H. E., 7. 10.

of Valerian¹: “He displayed a benignant clemency towards the men of God; not one of the emperors before him, even of those who were said to have professed Christianity, adopted so friendly an attitude as he at first maintained without disguise. His palace was filled with believers, and was wellnigh a Church of God.”

Hence it was that Lucius and his fellow-exiles were enabled to return to Rome after so short a banishment, which could not have lasted longer than from June to October. Immediately on his return he received a letter of warm congratulation from Cyprian, who pictures the satisfaction of the Church at welcoming their bishop to the enjoyment of a time of tranquillity.² “It was but recently,” he writes in the same letter,³ “that I wrote to congratulate you on being chosen by God to receive the double honour of being bishop and confessor in the Church of God. But now, with no less pleasure, do I congratulate you and your brothers in exile and the entire Church at Rome upon the equally proud return which the Lord in His bountiful protection has vouchsafed to you all: the pastor is now restored to his flock, the pilot to his helm, the ruler to his

¹ Eusebius, H. E., 7. 10. ² Cyprian, Ep. 61, § 4 (H., p. 697).

³ Cyprian, Ep. 61, § 1 (H., p. 695).

people. It is evident that God so ordered your banishment that, instead of the Church mourning an exiled bishop, the bishop returns to the Church with increased prestige." Cyprian refers briefly to the sudden outbreak of the persecution, and the amazing promptness with which Cornelius, and after him Lucius himself, was singled out for punishment by the secular power.

After the return of Lucius,¹ the Church enjoyed tranquillity for four years: the Church and the world were weary of strife, and both sides were glad to forget the antagonisms of the last few years. But it does not fall within our province to discuss the reign and the religious attitude of Valerian; we have only, indeed, pursued our inquiry into the reign of Gallus with the object of rendering complete our study of the persecution of Decius.

¹ How long Lucius held the see of Rome is uncertain. Jerome, Chron., Ol. 258, gives *Λούκιος μῆνας η'* (=8) in Migne's Patrology, vol. xxviii. p. 648. Eusebius, 7. 2: *μησὶ δ' οὐδὲ ὥλοις οὗτος ὀκτὼ τῷ λειτουργίᾳ διακονησάμενος*. But 'Lib. Pont.' (Duchesne), p. 65, gives: "Lucius . . . sedit ann. iii. m. iii. d. iii. Martyrio coronatur. . . . Quin etiam a Valeriano capite truncatus est iii. Non, Mart. Qui etiam sepultus est in cimiterio Calisti, Via Appia, viii. Kal. Sept." His epitaph in the "crypt of the popes" is ΛΟΥΚΙΣ. Cyprian, Ep. 68 (H., p. 748, 11), writes: "Beatorum martyrum Cornelii et Lucii honor." But we have no other evidence that he suffered martyrdom, either in respect of torture or death.

APPENDIX.

ON THE TECHNICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN "MARTYR"
AND "CONFESSOR."

I. In Ep. 55, § 9, Cyprian asks the question, "Nonne [Cornelius] inter gloriosos confessores et martyras deputandus?" and in the same section explains that Cornelius had suffered no actual bodily violence, although he had been prepared for whatever suffering might come upon him. This seems to imply that he could not as yet rank properly with the confessors and martyrs of the Church.

In Ep. 60, § 1, Cyprian, writing to Cornelius in exile, speaks of *confessio vestra, confessionis dux*. The word *martyr, martyrium*, does not occur in the Epistle, in connection with either Cornelius or any other sufferer under Gallus.

In Ep. 61, § 1, Cyprian, writing to the new bishop, Lucius, speaks of him (Lucius) as "by the grace of God *confessor pariter et sacerdos*." He has been in exile and has returned, and yet is no more than a *confessor*. In § 2 he explains that the *martyrium* of the Three Children was not invalidated because they were saved from death. He adds, "In the case of the confessors of Christ, the postponement of their

martyrium does not lessen the glory of their *confessio*, it only gives evidence of the richness of God's protection. . . Lucius, again, in his *confessio* was ready to endure any torture, but God delivered him.

. . . He now is a priest who can by practice as well as by precept call upon his people to take up the weapons of *confessio* and endure *martyrium*."

In § 3 he speaks for the first time of Cornelius as *beatus martyr*.

In § 4 Lucius is still a *confessor*, while Cyprian suggests that he and his party were recalled from exile that their noble actions might not be hidden, as possibly would have been the case had the *martyrium* of the *confessio* of each one of them been consummated in distant exile.

In Ep. 68, § 5, Cyprian writes to Stephanus, the successor of Lucius, saying that he must "keep alive the memory of his predecessors Cornelius and Lucius, *beati martyres*." Thus Lucius is now named *martyr*. They are both *in glorioso martyrio constituti*.¹ What had made the difference between their *confessio* and *martyrium*?

We have no reason to believe that either of them met a violent death, or died as the result of torture or ill-treatment. The 'Liberian Catalogue' (354 A.D.²) calls Cornelius and Lucius *exiles* and *confessors*, while

¹ Cf. also Cyprian, Ep. 69 (H., p. 752, 12): "Apud Cornelium, quem praeter sacerdotii honorem *martyrio* quoque Dominus glorificavit."

² Görres, Kirche und Statt, p. 598.

relating that both Fabianus (250) and Sixtus II. (258) “*passi sunt.*” On the other hand, in the ‘Liber Pontificalis’ (ed. Duchesne, p. 65 f.) we read of Fabianus, Cornelius, and Lucius, that each “*martyrio coronatur.*” On the tombstone of Cornelius the hand which wrote his name wrote at the same time MARTYR immediately after it; while the resting-place of Lucius was marked merely by his name, followed by no title of *martyr*, as was originally the case with Fabianus, who reposes in the same vault, the “crypt of the popes,” and whose title in Greek characters, MP, was plainly added at a later date.

This comparison of evidence shows that the claims of Cornelius to *martyrium* are far stronger than those of Lucius; for Cornelius died in exile, and might conceivably have succumbed to the hardships which it entailed, whereas Lucius was neither exposed to the risk of persecution under Decius, as was Cornelius (Cyprian, Ep. 55, § 9), nor was he tortured under Gallus, nor did he die in exile.

II. We must now look at a different side of the question. Aubespine (‘De Vet. Eccl. Rit. Observv.,’ 21, p. 152) writes: “*Martyres* ii solum vere sint existimandi qui morte aut aliqua leviori poena mulctati essent, *confessores* vero qui ante magistratum constituti, nomen fidemque Christi constanter et impavide professi fuissent.” This distinction is very much the same as that observed by Müller (‘Bussinstituition in Karthago unter Cyprian,’ p. 6); both may have been imprisoned,

but a *confessor* does not become a *martyr* till he dies or has been tortured. (Cf. Ep. 61, § 2, “Dilata martyria non meritum confessionis minuant;” and § 4, “Confessionis consummata martyria.”) M. Aubé, on the other hand (pp. 288, 300), regards the two expressions as used synonymously, and applied to any who have confessed at the risk of their life, or have actually suffered death in prison, either after regular sentence, or after torture, or from the hardships of prison life. He adds that Cyprian applied the double title to those Christians at Carthage who were in prison awaiting their turn to appear; and even though some of these were set at liberty before their trial, they still retained their title in Cyprian’s estimation. The readiness to suffer and to die was sufficient. But the collocation *martyres et confessores* is so frequent (*e.g.*, Ep. 20, H., p. 528, 6) that some distinction between the two terms seems to be necessary, if Cyprian is to be allowed to mean anything by the double phrase. It is obvious that *martyres* might be living (cf. Ep. 20, H., p. 528, 2, “Exambire ad martyras passim”), and therefore Müller’s distinction has some point, whereas Aubé’s account makes the phrase a mere repetition. We should prefer to state the technical difference thus: those who appeared before the local court of inquiry, and were remanded for further examination, or were banished (Ep. 10, H., p. 490, 6), were *confessors*; but immediately that the torture had been applied (in the presence of the proconsul) they became *martyrs*, and the category included those who died under the

severities of their imprisonment.¹ This is directly confirmed by the address of Cyprian's Epistle 6, which is to the *confessores*, whereas Epistle 10, written later, is to the same people, who are now *martyres et confessores*, for the proconsul has arrived and torture has begun (cf. Ep. 10, H., p. 492, 14, "Vox . . . de *martyris* ore prorupit, cum Mappalicus . . . inter cruciatus suos proconsuli diceret"). The whole of Epistle 10 is very instructive on the subject of the distinction. In sec. 1 we find that the exile into which the first tribunal might send recalcitrants was borne *confessione perstanti*. In the same section Cyprian writes that of those who had to face the torture (under the proconsul) some had already received martyrdom, the "crown of confession," as having undergone the torture, others were close to the "crown" (*i.e.*, they would soon be tortured), but that all who had been imprisoned were ready to suffer for their faith. In sec. 2 he writes to those who had been tortured of the *consummatio glorie* (which is equivalent to *martyrium*, as is shown by passages we have before quoted). In sec. 4 he calls upon those yet untortured to follow the example of the *beatus martyr* Mappalicus, and of those who had suffered with him, in order that the link between them which had been formed by their common *confessio et hospitium carceris* might be strengthened by the *consummatio*.

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 12 (H., p. 503, 12): "Cum voluntati et confessioni nostræ . . . in carcere accedit et moriendi terminus, consummata martyrii gloria est."

matio virtutis et corona cœlestis (i.e., *martyrium*). In sec. 5 we read of the *martyrum sanguis* and the *martyrum crux*.

One more example will be interesting, as showing how rigidly Cyprian adheres to his own distinction. In Ep. 55, § 5, he writes of Moyses, who appended his signature to the letter from the Roman clergy (Ep. 30) as *tunc adhuc confessore nunc martyre subscribente*. Now Ep. 30 is later than Ep. 28, and contemporaneous with Ep. 31, belonging to about June 250, and in these three letters the Roman confessors, as we shall show, were looking forward to the torture, and were merely *confessores*. In Ep. 37, however, which belongs to October 250, Cyprian adverts to the tortures the Roman confessors had now undergone, and mentions their *martyrium* expressly, four times at least: thus Moyses is now a martyr, not because he was the only Roman confessor who had died when Cyprian wrote Ep. 55, but because between the time of his agreeing to the letter of the Roman clergy and the time of Cyprian's writing he had undergone the torture, and thus exchanged mere *confessorship* for *martyrdom*. In proof of our assertion that the phraseology of Epp. 28-31 differed expressly from that of Ep. 37, we adduce the following examples. Ep. 28, § 1. "You were called upon [at Rome] to take the first step, and led the resistance with auspicious success, although it so fell out that Carthage saw the first *martyrdoms* consummated by torture; nevertheless you, who set so good an example, enjoy equal honour with the *martyrs*. Your hands plaited the crowns

which you sent across the sea for the heads of your brethren at Carthage." § 2: "I congratulate you on your crown of obedience as warmly as I congratulate the *martyrs* here." In Ep. 31, § 1, the Roman confessors write: "Possibly the sole reason for our having been so long detained in prison was that we should wait for the encouragement which your letters would give us to move forward with greater gladness to the crown that awaits us" (*i.e.*, the *corona martyrii*, after torture). § 3 again points to tortures in the future. In § 5 they say: "If we have not yet shed our blood, we have at least been ready to do so for a long time.

. . . Pray that every day may see us more fully strengthened to meet our trial." In Ep. 37 the whole scene is changed; we read (§ 2 *fin.*): "You shed your blood, and drink with gladness the cup of *martyrdom*." In § 3 their tortures are described, and in § 4 they are three times referred to as *martyrs*.

This long series of examples proves clearly that Cyprian, in his writings belonging to 250 and 251, observed with the utmost precision the distinction which he laid down between the two words.¹

III. Now Cornelius, to secure Cyprian's verdict of *martyrdom*, ought either to have been tortured or to

¹ A hint that the distinction was his may be gathered from the spurious treatise, 'De dupli martyrio' (H., vol. iii.), § 31: "Ecclesiæ usus *martyres* appellaus eos qui violenta morte decesserunt, *confessores* qui constanter in cruciatibus ac minis mortis professi sunt nomine Domini Jesu, parati mortem opere vel potius martyrii supremam coronam ambientes."

have died in prison. That he did neither one nor the other is almost certain. But he died in enforced exile away from Rome and his Church, which for a man in his position was in every sense as painful as imprisonment. No impression would be more likely to arise than that he had succumbed to the hardships of his exile : he would thus readily come into the category of those whom Cyprian (Ep. 12, H., p. 503, 12) accepts as *martyrs*—viz., those “*quorum voluntati et confessioni in carcere et vinculis accedit et moriendi terminus.*”

The case of Lucius was very similar to that of Cornelius. Both suffered banishment, and both died within a year of leaving Rome, although Lucius returned before his death. A concession had been made in the case of Cornelius, and as there was so much in common between the sufferings of Lucius and Cornelius, a further concession would be easy, especially as with the passage of time and the altered circumstances the distinction could not be as carefully observed as in the thick of the persecution ; and, further, such an exception would be a fitting token of regard for the memory of two bishops who had piloted the Church through this stormy crisis in her history.

Our conclusion then is that neither was technically (*i.e.*, in Cyprian's rigid use of the word) a martyr, but that by a slight transference of meaning—explicable under the particular circumstances—Cyprian has conceded the title to both Cornelius and Lucius. It seems unlikely that Cyprian, who has hitherto main-

tained so careful a distinction, should here employ the word “in a comprehensive sense, meaning ‘*confessor*,’ as generally in the Early Church.”¹

¹ Dr Görres in F. X. Kraus, *Real-Encyclopädie, Christenverfolgung*, p. 238. In the same place he says that De Rossi regards Cornelius, S. Basnage Lucius, and Neander both, as martyrs in the persecution. Dr Görres takes Lipsius’s view, and regards them merely as exiles. In an editor’s note on the passage, F. X. Kraus entirely disagrees with Görres, and maintains unhesitatingly the martyrdom of Cornelius.

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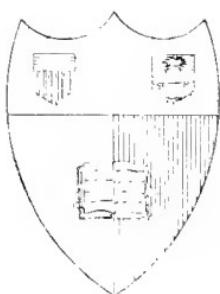
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